





No. 748

Mrs. Venn

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THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE

A Novel

BY

MRS. VENN



NEW YORK


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THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION

TERENCE GARFOYLE, M. B., D. D., Vicar of St. Amwell's, Cambridge, was a distinguished and remarkable man : distinguished by attainments and position, remarkable in his personal appearance. He was once flippantly, but happily, described by the impertinent wit of a feminine critic as "a cross between a mediæval saint and a nineteenth-century gargoyle." His form was large and loosely jointed, his height decidedly over six feet ; but he lost the benefit of his stature by his gait. His countenance was broad, and blanched in hue ; but its expression lighted up on presentation of any idea which stirred his manifold sympathies in a way which encouraged all who knew him highly to value this token of his esteem. This diffusive smile of Dr. Garfoyle's changed the whole aspect of his countenance, as a burst of shimmering, penetrating sunlight irradiates all the level landscape on a hazy day in the Fenlands.

Terence Garfoyle must not, however, be represented merely as a man of somewhat unusual, or even grotesque, appearance, who chanced to be vicar of an obscure parish in the poorest part of the town. That he was Vicar of St. Amwell's at all was due not to his circumstances but to his conscience, which ever active mentor had led him to relinquish the posts of tutor and dean of his college in order that he might the more uninterruptedly devote his untiring energies to the service of his poorer neighbors. His remarkable powers found their exercise in a hand-to-hand tussle with the darker problems of society as he met them unclothed and ready for him at his vicarage gates.

In describing him as Vicar of St. Amwell's, that designation has been preferred which he himself would have adopted ; as a matter of fact, he was the "Burnett Professor of Patristic Divinity" in the university of which he was a distinguished member, and further he was known as a Canon of St. Ives. For the last three years, ever since a Liberal ministry was in, he was moreover frequently mentioned as a man likely to be thought of in any possible vacancy for a bishopric. The idea was in the air : a seed of thought blown by the breath of friendly opinion far beyond the range of his own short-sighted eyes : for no humbler, less ambitious man ever trod the steps of the divinity schools or mounted the pulpit of St. Mary's when it was his turn to preach on Sundays.

In early days, when he was just beginning life upon his own account as a promising young doctor, fresh from a London hospital, Terence Garfoyle had had a serious attachment to a young lady who changed her mind about him ; and in consequence, he being of a steadfast nature, her conduct had affected his whole subsequent career. There were aggravating circumstances in the affair which reduced the young fellow to depths of self-abasement, and when he again rose to the surface, after the tempest wherein his hopes had been shipwrecked, it was to relinquish the direct profession of medicine. The same state of mind which formerly sent men into a monastery converted Terence Garfoyle into a priest, with views as to the celibacy of the clergy. Yet his fondness for the science of medicine, even after he had given up its direct practice, was of the greatest service in his new calling to those to whom he thus doubly ministered. He did not, indeed, regard one profession as superior in itself to the other ; but he acted in obedience to an irresistible conviction in claiming his right to traffic with the least material view of his fellow-creatures. He was fifty years of age now, and he had never married.

Dinner was an early and monotonous meal in Dr. Garfoyle's vicarage ; and both the company and the surroundings were held by many to be unworthy of the vicar. The very table was meagre ; long and narrow, and of unpainted boards, it had been picked up at a sale of a temperance club, together with the benches which surrounded it. These were occupied on a day early in the October

term some years back by the vicar, his curates, students, housekeeper, and district nurse.

The students were learning parish work, and, being quite too poor to pay their expenses, found themselves members of the miscellaneous party established in the vicarage. Had they been wealthy, they might have gone elsewhere: plenty of training-grounds would have been open to them; as it was, they were impecunious, almost penniless, so they sat at Dr. Garfoyle's table and shared the vicarage mutton with the curates, the two women, and last and least of all with Shadrach Trupper, the housekeeper's eight-year-old son.

Mrs. Trupper was a depressed-looking woman of middle age; she never took the liberty of looking up during meals save to reprove her son for acts below what she considered the dignity of the situation. She was a widow of no means; poverty might with certainty be predicated of every chosen inmate of that house.

Mr. Trupper had failed in farming. It had been a very small farm indeed, in the eastern counties, just on the border of the Fens, where everybody failed together in the first unpleasant and still remembered days of agricultural depression. While everybody was still astonished at it, when there was a mild sort of panic about it, it overtook and swallowed up Shadrach Trupper, senior. His lands were poor and his wits were small; the crisis was a big thing, and he was only an insignificant man; he made no stand at all, but succumbed with astonishing rapidity. His nerve gave way at the outset; he possessed courage of a certain sort, it is true, but only that which proceeds from lack of imaginative resource; accordingly, for want of any better notion, he went and securely hanged himself one foggy Monday morning in the least dilapidated of his rotten barns. Mrs. Trupper might have saved his life by the exercise of a little imagination on her part, for she arrived upon the spot with his earliest struggles; but, presence of mind not being her strong point, she departed to scream for assistance, no longer needed when it arrived. Hence she was left in a condition to be provided for by Dr. Garfoyle as housekeeper at his charitable vicarage, where she had now been established for five years with her son. Shadrach was a ruddy boy who seemed to have absorbed his mother's vitality. While she glanced rapidly round the table

with one eye at a time—she had an error of refraction in her eyes—and seemed to feel that she was taking a liberty in venturing to deprive someone else of the food, he stared boldly at the rest of the party, and was only withheld from chattering to Dr. Garfoyle himself by his mother's continual efforts beneath the table.

The meal was a very silent affair. The curates exchanged a few low-toned syllables, mostly on parish matters ; the students, who could make noise enough when they chose, stood in awe of Dr. Garfoyle ; the district nurse considered her cases. Dr. Garfoyle himself ate but little ; he was going to dine out that evening at a very different dinner-table to that at which he now presided, and being pressed for time he read his letters while the others consumed their common fare. One of these documents chiefly absorbed his attention. It was from his old and tried friend Mrs. Bratton-Fleming, and he wished that it had not been written. Its object was to bespeak his interest on behalf of a young sister-in-law of the writer's, the widow of her youngest brother, Frank Goldenour.

Victoria Goldenour had, Dr. Garfoyle learned as he perused the confiding epistle, entered the writer's family at the age of nineteen by marriage with her brother Captain Goldenour, when his regiment was quartered in India, an arrangement which Mrs. Bratton-Fleming confessed was "a great trial to the family" ; for the young lady was possessed of few recommendations save that of her own beauty. She had no fortune, and her family had come to grief in Australia.

"But when he brought her home to England—oh, my dear Dr. Garfoyle," the narrator wrote, "we all began at once to forgive her everything, even when we most disapproved of her. A dozen times a day we hated her, and yet between whiles we adored her almost as much as poor Frank did himself. It is quite impossible for me to describe to you, old bachelor as you are, wherein lay her singular power ; I can only say, generally, in her loveliness and in her unexpectedness. You must go and call upon her, for she has taken lodgings in Cambridge, and then perhaps you too will feel the force of what I say about her. Now pray go, to please me, and also because it will be doing her a service. I declare to you that, middle-aged woman as I am, I have wept when I have offended Victoria, although I have probably said less than I felt it my duty

to say ; for really since poor Frank has been gone, she has been more 'accentuated' than ever. Perhaps you remember the occurrence ? He was killed at her feet, you know, on the Underground Railway, when she had been shopping in town. Poor fellow ! he had to get her and the child and the nurse and a heap of her packages into the carriage, and you know how they go off at once. It's impossible to say how it happened now, but it was clear enough at the time : he slipped between the carriage and the platform, the train got into motion and crushed him. He died in twenty minutes, on the waiting-room sofa. The child saw it all. His nerves have never recovered the shock. He is a beautiful boy, but terribly delicate. You who are so fond of children will be won by him. Victoria's habits are luxurious ; my poor brother had had hard work enough to keep her ; he had been quite unable to provide for her after his death, which, as he was such a young man, might have been supposed to be far enough off ; the two families have had to combine to provide her with a decent income. We pay it quarterly, but she always exceeds it. At the present moment she must be deeply in debt, and we cannot conceive what has taken her to Cambridge. Would you please call upon her, and give her the countenance of your weighty and influential presence ? She is sure to attract attention, especially in a university town, and wise friends are far to seek. You will find it hard to associate her with the idea of this tragedy, but Victoria is not devoid of feeling ; only she can't help looking happy. No doubt there is as much real feeling possible beneath pretty hats as beneath the most conventional costume of woe ; moreover, it is actually three years ago since poor Frank died. However, I frankly confess it is impossible to analyze her. Please befriend her if you can make time to do so."

So wrote Dr. Garfoyle's esteemed correspondent. He thrust the letter into his pocket with a feeling of annoyance which it demanded the strenuous habit of self-discipline to control. What might have suggested itself as a pleasure to some men took the shape of a disagreeable task to him ; as a duty, then, let it be done. He would call upon Mrs. Victoria Goldenour at his earliest available half-hour of leisure. He consulted his memoranda for a free afternoon-hour, and found one on the following Friday. This was Tuesday.

He noted the engagement thus in his book, "V. G. X 4.30. Friday"; which needs explanation perhaps, and shall have it.

At the school to which Terence Garfoyle had been sent as a boy, they always whipped the lads on Friday for all the offences committed during the rest of the week. Hence the association of Friday with the performance of penitential acts had been early rooted in the vicar's mind, and as a disagreeable duty the visit to Mrs. Goldenour went down among the crosses to be cheerfully accepted on the following Friday. Having decided this, he endeavored to dismiss the subject from his otherwise pre-occupied thoughts. Shadrach Trupper always sat by his side at table. Dr. Garfoyle was fond of the boy; indeed, the fondness of this solitary man for children was in itself remarkable. The dull dinner had drawn out its wearisome length.

"Why is Shadrach so subdued to-day?" Dr. Garfoyle asked of the mother.

The child hung his head, and looked at his depressing parent sideways.

"Because he has done something wrong, sir, I regret to say," she replied. "He has been into the attic, and has seen the poor creature there, though I expressly bade him not to go; and what with conscience, and concern at what he saw, he has not been himself ever since."

All eyes at the table were fixed upon the unlucky boy.

"Well, the sin has brought its own punishment," observed the vicar calmly, "so we will say no more about it."

"But I am concerned about the poor pig-boy," said Shadrach, flushing hotly.

"More than one of us is concerned about that problem," said the junior curate; "but as for you, Shadrach, my boy, climb up upon my shoulders and let us hear you sing the Latin grace I taught you. Shut your eyes, and remember what you're going to be."

"A chorister," said the boy; and, in a strong, true voice, with notes vibrantly rich and clear, he sang while the little company waited and listened. Then Dr. Garfoyle turned to consult the "Orders for the Day," which hung suspended on the wall.

"The funeral is fixed for half-past two," said the senior curate; "do you wish us all to attend?"

"Certainly ; and you too, Mrs. Trupper, if you please," answered the vicar. "It is the privilege of the widows of the parish to support each other."

Mrs. Trupper sighed deeply, and acquiesced.

"She has had too many funerals to agree with her," remarked one of the divinity students, as the party separated.

"If only she would not fix her eye upon me all dinner-time," observed another of the young men.

"Upon you ? Nonsense ! I can swear she never took it off me till the pudding disappeared," said the other.

"She won't wear glasses because she thinks it would be taking a liberty to presume to look anyone straight in the face," said the first youth.

"I don't wonder Shadrach senior preferred hanging to having her eye always upon him," said the other.

Meanwhile Dr. Garfoyle, having caught the person of whom they spoke in the hall, informed her that he dined out that evening.

"In that case, sir," she said, "may I take an hour to go and see my sister ? Pye is her name, sir, Mrs. Emma Pye, and she has come to Cambridge in attendance on a lady and a little boy. Goldenour is the name of her employer, sir. It's a great thing for me to see her, sir ; we have not met for many years. The lady is the widow of a captain in the army, who was killed ; like Mr. Trupper, only not just similarly."

"Nothing but widows," groaned the students, overhearing the conversation from the dining-room. "Ugh ! Boiled mutton and funerals ! Tragedies and problems ! Black stuff gowns, with nurses' caps, widows' weeds, and Greek Testament ! Cheerful truly ! The road to hell is paved with good works and no mistake !"

"You forget there's no such place nowadays," said his companion.

"The doctor's going to dine out to-night. It won't be like this there. Silks and satins. Flowers and scents. No idiots, paralytics, nor consumptives visible. When I've lived half a century I'll dine out every night. Now for the funeral. Here goes !"

The funeral was that of a young man who had died of small-pox, in a crowded cottage. The wife had refused to permit the removal

of the body to the parish mortuary, so Dr. Garfoyle had had the coffin placed upon the table in a class-room adjoining the vicarage ; the room had been prepared as a mortuary chapel, and the procession was to start from thence. He headed it himself. Here he was entirely sympathetic : the consistent attitude of misery never failed to reach his heart, but he resented the association, suggested by the letter in his pocket, of vanity, frivolity, and fashion with the eternal tragedies of life and death. Yet he could not effectually banish the subject. What had he to do with such women as this Victoria Goldenour promised to be ?

Long ago, it was true, he had played his part with a woman, perhaps as fair and as false as any ; but he regarded that episode in his experience as the price he had paid for his present absolute subjugation of passion to purpose, of the senses to intellect. That no pulse stirred in him unsanctioned by his higher will was the outcome of the old conflict, the purchase of the old pain. Never without poignant suffering, however, were those old days recalled to his memory, wherein the young Terence Garfoyle had groaned in the grip of a thralldom which had emancipated the middle-aged man from the bondage of passion. The empire of the priest over himself was, in truth, not the slumber of untried forces, nor the inactivity of a feeble frame, but the mastery acquired by the resolute discipline of years ; so complete now that it seemed to become a second nature. Perhaps he himself alone knew that there were hours, even yet, wherein young Terence Garfoyle's agony agitated the professor of divinity's bosom ; or it may have been intuitively divined by those of his younger friends, who with unerring felicity of instinct not unfrequently consulted him about their matrimonial troubles. But the vanity that played with passion was abhorrent to him ; more abhorrent even than the weakness which, associating itself with what was commonly called "sin," yet hid in its lurid depths some spark of the divine fire.

At a little after seven on that same evening Dr. Garfoyle, in irreproachable evening clerical attire, rapped loudly at the door of his housekeeper's room, and cried in his genial voice:

"Now, Mrs. Trupper, at once if you please. Where is the porridge for the attic ? Let one of the young girls bring it and the apron upstairs immediately."

"Not as you are, sir, surely," said the woman in deprecatory tones.

"At once, if you please, Mrs. Trupper ! And as Shadrach has eaten of the forbidden tree of knowledge he had better come too."

Shortly the three arrived at the door of the attic, Dr. Garfoyle first, followed by one of the many maidens instructed in the mysteries of service at the vicarage, and lastly by Shadrach, awe-struck and reluctant ; his brown eyes wide with dread, his crimson cheeks several shades redder than usual. When the door was opened he hung back, hiding himself in the skirts of the girl, who handed the dish and spoon and large coarse apron to the vicar.

"Come, Shadrach, come, and help me feed the poor, sad boy," said Dr. Garfoyle, pausing on the threshold of the bare garret.

The girl vanished, and he and the child entered together.

The room was bare of all furniture and was lighted solely by a skylight. On a great heap of clean straw in one corner lay something human, enveloped in a rough sack, from which only a head protruded, and such a head ! hideous, enormous, brutal ; the head of a debased and deformed idiot ; of a creature far below a brute in intelligence, utterly devoid of the power even of feeding like the very swine. At sight of the repulsive object, young Shadrach lifted up his boyish voice and wept loudly. He would have fled, but Dr. Garfoyle, who had by this time finished covering his clothing with the apron, laid a gentle compelling hand upon his shoulder.

"See, Shadrach," he said, "it is only a very ugly and unfortunate boy who has never grown up properly. Shall I tell you all about him, and then you will not be so inquisitive or frightened any more, and perhaps you will learn to come and help me feed him, so long as he is here ? He is going away very soon to a great hospital, where they will take care of him. You know, Shadrach, your mother and I meant you never to see him ; he has not been here long, and, if you had been obedient, you would never have known there was anyone in the attic at all."

"Araminta told me," sobbed the boy. "She told me all about him ; she said his mother hated him and she kept him in a pig-sty, in a bit of old carpet, all horrid and dirty ; and she wouldn't give

him any food, and she wanted him to die, and he made dreadful noises all the nights, and the neighbors heard him howl; and he would have died in another hour, and 'Minta said, 'a good job, too,' only you heard of it and had him fetched here in a barrow, and she said you washed him yourself because no one else in the house would do it, and she had to bring up the bath and the water. And she said—oh, a lot more dreadful things that made me want to come and see him."

All this was uttered in one gabbled and vociferous scale as he edged further and further away from the monster.

"Oh, will he come near me?" he cried. "Let me go! Let me go! I've dreamt of it all the nights, and I'm sure I heard it howl!"

"Be quiet," said the vicar, as he laid his large hand on the boy's head with gentle force; while the idiot, moved by an instinct of hunger, tried to roll toward the food, but in vain. "He is perfectly harmless. He cannot hurt you. Come near and hold the plate while I feed him. He cannot feed himself, and he makes a terrible mess, so I cover myself up like this. That's it, nearer still. He is going away directly they can be ready for him in the asylum, but if you want to please me and to make up for your disobedience, you will come and help me to feed him every day until he goes. There, now you are standing quite steadily, and we shall get on twice as fast."

The doctor's influence over the frightened child was evidently complete, he grew perfectly still and held the dish firmly. At first he caught his breath with gasps each time that the miserable object swayed toward him, but soon he asked in a collected voice:

"Why did you put him in a sack, sir?"

"Because all his limbs are useless and misshapen, and he can wear no clothes. It is best to hide him so."

"But is he a real boy like me? And did God make him, or did the devil? 'Minta said the devil made them when they were like this."

"Shadrach," said the doctor, replying only by a sigh, "sing to him, and see if it makes any difference."

Then Shadrach, relieving his chest by one little last sob, lifted up his beautiful voice once more, and in that bare garret sang to the human animal, grunting and slobbering over its food, Charles

Kingsley's exquisite hymn for children. Stranger application perhaps it never had. The evening light fell from the large window above his head upon the child's clear face, echoes from the unceilinged rafters gave back the tones of his lovely voice ; Dr. Garfoyle's repulsive task was sweetened, and the pure and hidden meaning of the disgusting and menial act of service found expression in the harmony of the child's sweet song.

"Shadrach," said the doctor, "remember they brought not only bright little boys like you to Jesus when He was down here, but creatures such as this, and He touched them and made them new. Let us ask Him to make Budge new some day : and meanwhile let us feed him and keep him clean while we have him, because it is all we can do for him. I have to come and wash him and give him clean straw every day. I could not ask anyone else to do it."

"But you are the master," said the child, with awe in his tones.

"Yes, I am the master, and the chief person in this house ; therefore it is I who must serve Budge. You cannot understand that yet ; but you shall help me, Shadrach ; you shall come and sing to me every day, while I wait upon Budge, until they take him away, and you shall not talk to Araminta any more about him. You and I are going to have a secret between us. Shall we, Shadrach ? Now I must go, or I shall be late for my dinner-party. Take the dish and the spoon quickly back to your mother."

Dr. Garfoyle was going to dine in his College Lodge ; which, as buildings go, was one of the most beautiful, ancient, and unrestored in that university town. The company met in the large drawing-room, which was one of the most interesting features in the venerable pile of buildings. The party, consisting of about thirty persons, mostly resident members of the university, their wives, and daughters, with a careful selection of B. A.'s to match the young ladies, had already assembled. Dr. Garfoyle had been delayed, as we have seen ; indeed, he had feared to find himself quite the last of the expected guests. It was evident, however, that this was not the case.

The clock had already chimed a quarter-past eight ; which was very late for the early hours commonly kept in university society. The lady of the Lodge was looking anxiously at the door, and was consulting her husband with covert but impatient glances. That

air of expectation and unrest was pervading the whole assembled party which comes over even the best-bred society on similar occasions. Who was being waited for? Certainly some important person, probably a stranger, used to London hours and unaccustomed to the punctual ways of academic centres. Who could it be? The new M. P. and his wife were there. The Vice-Chancellor and his party had arrived. The bishop who had preached at St. Mary's on the preceding Sunday was looking affably at Dr. Garfoyle. Who could it be? The suspense did not last long; Dr. Garfoyle had had barely time to grasp the situation before the door was again thrown open, and the butler announced:

“Mrs. Goldenour!”

CHAPTER II

MRS. GOLDENOUR

DR. GARFOYLE was, as has been confessed, short-sighted; but, as he had immediately preceded the last comer, he found himself near enough, when he turned his enquiring eyes upon the doorway, to share the thrill of surprise which agitated the rest of the company at sight of the beautiful woman who entered alone. Like the rest of the people assembled, he was completely dazzled by the unexpected apparition which greeted his gaze. So this was Mrs. Goldenour, this lovely being in robes of softest satin embroidered in silver, over which trailed a sort of lace toga—so Dr. Garfoyle would, in masculine ignorance, have called it had he been able to attempt any description of her investiture.

As she advanced, with self-possessed air, toward her hostess, Dr. Garfoyle felt that here was one of the most perfect figures, as to form and coloring, which he had ever beheld. That he was not singular in his judgment was evidenced by the sort of ripple of excitement which moved the rest of the company as this perfectly undreamed-of vision greeted their impatient eyes. A momentary silence fell upon the room. The buzz of conversation was instantaneously suspended. Life affords so few new sensations of sight. Here was one to be made the most of. “Oh! and who was she?”

No one had ever seen her before. And she came in alone. "Where was her husband?" "To whom did she belong?" Unspoken questions. Thoughts common to the waiting company.

But the master's wife knew perfectly, of course, that this "showy Mrs. Goldenour," was really nobody at all, that she was a quite unimportant person, staying in inexpensive lodgings on Parker's Piece. The lady felt that she had been extremely kind to honor the introduction which Mrs. Goldenour had brought her by an invitation to dinner at all. Tea would have done quite well for her. Moreover, she was painfully aware that no less a personage than the bishop's wife had been kept waiting full twenty minutes for her dinner by the bad taste of this presumptuous stranger. So she barely introduced the wonderful new-comer intelligibly, when she requested Dr. Garfoyle to take her down to dinner in their due and proper turn.

The perfect figure drew itself up, and gathered its shining robes around it to allow the master of the college to pass by with the bishop's wife upon his arm, and Dr. Garfoyle stood beside her.

"Have I committed a social crime?" she asked, turning her beautiful countenance toward him. "What have I done? What is wrong?" and, as she spoke, she glanced at the inadequate representation of her own perfections afforded by an antique mirror which surmounted the oak wainscot of the room.

"If you have committed a crime, I am your companion in disgrace," replied Dr. Garfoyle. "I, like yourself, was detained; I only got here three minutes before you arrived. I sadly fear that we have both kept this distinguished company waiting for their feast. Permit me, now is our turn;" and he offered her his arm.

"Now, how did you know that? Do tell me. I've been here only a fortnight, and I've not a notion of your rules of precedence or anything else. Are you a very unimportant person? Is that why you are allotted to me? I am. Why, I went to St. Mary's Church to the university sermon last Sunday. This very bishop was preaching, and the whole place was crammed; so I asked an official, or at any rate a man in a gown, where I was to sit. He looked at me, choked, and bolted. Then I asked a lady, and she said just this, 'M. A.'s wives?' I nodded, though I'd not a notion what she meant. 'Count your pews, ten down.' Now,

you are a clergyman, I see, and I should like to know what on earth that woman intended ; for when I went ‘ten down,’ nobody seemed to care about having me there. So I just stood in the aisle, right up where I was, and—do you know, Canon Garfoyle,” she said, glancing at the card before his plate to get his name, “I’ve been a good bit stared at in both hemispheres—Captain Goldenour used to think they knew how to stare in Sydney when I was a bride—but I’ve never been so riddled in all my life with glances as I was while I stood up there in your big church, after the bishop had got well under way. At last an old lady poked me out a footstool. It wasn’t even clean. And she bade me ‘sit down.’ Sit down on it in the aisle, for all the world like a chidden child that had no business to look as it did, or to be where it was !”

“And you took it and thanked her ?”

“Who? I? I gave it her back so nicely. It was very dusty, and my gloves were the worse for touching its ears. I put it back under her feet ever so kindly, and I walked out. Come, Canon Garfoyle, confess you are terrible respecters of persons over here.” And she began to sup her neglected soup.

While she was so engaged Dr. Garfoyle observed her sideways as critically as he dared, considering their very close proximity, squeezed in side by side at the long and handsome dining-table, with only the space allowed them by somewhat narrow antique chairs. She certainly was most beautiful. He did not wonder that all men stared at her when, according to her own account, she had stood up in her proudly disguised consciousness of being something unusual in the crowded church during the service. She was so perfect in form and figure, her coloring so soft and yet so glowing ; she was so harmoniously and artistically attired. This much he at once saw and felt, and that he was not singular in the effect she produced upon him was evident ; for, when he had time to glance round the magnificently spread board, it struck him that, so far as his spectacles allowed him to judge, every man present was perceptibly aware of Mrs. Goldenour’s presence, the only exceptions being perhaps one or two aged or greedy dons.

She seemed to have produced a sudden fall in the values of all the other ladies present. If one woman could look as she did,

why must all the others look as they did? It was as though some being from another plane of perfection altogether had appeared in their midst to confound them. Until she entered, the older ladies had passed muster well enough as suitably attired persons in their best gowns; and their daughters had looked fresh and fair, as good and happy English girls should look in pretty frocks. But this woman in her wonderfully considered toilet belonged to a different order altogether. She raised the standard of feminine perfection to a height unattainable by any others present. By her side the older ladies looked ill-dressed and vulgar, and the younger ones commonplace. She occupied a first class alone; sundry examiners present created it for her upon the spot. These were capable of stating their conviction in terms; but Dr. Garfoyle's nature was too chivalrous to permit him to criticise any woman disparagingly, from his housekeeper upward; still he felt what he was not prepared to own.

So this was Mrs. Bratton-Fleming's "family affliction," this brilliant colonial lady sitting by his side sipping her champagne. Dr. Garfoyle was an ardent teetotaler, of course. His friend's letter concerning the lady lay even now in his coat-pocket, so close to her chair that he wished he had left it in his morning coat when he dressed for dinner. It made him even anxious lest in drawing out his handkerchief he should inadvertently toss it into her lap, amid her shining silks and laces. But being a man of undisturbed presence, and one accustomed to control and never to succumb to situations, he showed no sign of embarrassment when his neighbor, turning her beautiful gray eyes upon his broad countenance, said with a charming smile:

"Do you know it's quite queer that you should take me in to dinner, Canon Garfoyle, for I've been hearing nothing but your praises all the afternoon till, to tell the truth—as I always do—I grew rather tired of you, and I felt inclined to say to myself, 'Well, he isn't all the university anyway, if he is a medical man, an ideal vicar, a real canon, and a divinity professor!' Do they let one man get everything up here? Are there no consolation stakes? You see I'm poor myself, and so I feel for the poor, and I object to you on principle! As I told you while his lordship, hidden by that sumptuous piece of plate up there, was preaching

to the university, I was invited to take a seat under or upon a footstool. And in that solemn moment, do you know, I registered a dear little vow, if ever I was a bishop's wife myself,—I may be, you know, stranger things than that have happened,—then and not before would I sit upon a footstool in the aisle."

Dr. Garfoyle, for answer, glanced at her rich dress and at the diamond stars which flashed in her warm brown hair, and smiled. It was a kindly commentary upon her boast of poverty; a benign, fatherly criticism impossible to misunderstand or resent. This was the lady who, he had been told, had a meagre allowance of three hundred a year doled out to her by her deceased husband's family and by her own. A deeper flush upon her smiling face showed that she accepted the implied compliment while rejecting the criticism.

"May I be permitted to ask," he said courteously, "to whom I am indebted for the honor of having been introduced to your notice, though I regret that I should all unwittingly have already incurred the double reproach of being a successful man and a bore?"

She drew the line of a baby frown upon her forehead, considered for a second, and then said :

"Well, I did bring a note of introduction to Mrs. Gruter, the wife of the ex-professor, and I did meet Mrs. Keltridge there. They certainly mentioned your name, but with due discretion; the person who ran away with your reputation possesses a name not to be mentioned at this high and mighty dinner-table. Still, if no one is listening, I may dare to confide to you that it was Mrs. Pye, my boy's nurse, she being sister to your Mrs. Trupper. Did you know I had a little son—no, how should you? Such a lovely darling, with a skin just like tinted alabaster. Nearly seven years old, but so frail and delicate. And you've got a housekeeper—you see I know all about you—and I heard everything, all about the 'Guild of Widows,' and the rest of it. Don't you think you had better enroll me? I am one of them, you know, and I am as poor and lonely as the rest."

Beneath this pretty chatter Dr. Garfoyle fancied that he detected a note of unreality, so he replied gravely:

"The 'Guild of Widows' of which our dependents seem to have

spoken, foolishly perhaps, is but a little company of poor and desolate women in my large and poverty-stricken parish. They visit the new-made widows and help to console them, they assist in the charge of the children and the house until after the funeral, at which they attend to lend the support of their presence to the chief mourner. They are for the most part worn elderly women who have acquired experience in the school of suffering."

Mrs. Goldenour listened to all this in silence, then she gave a little inward laugh as though some funny thought had struck her; and if the modern doctrine of "thought-transference" be true, it was from her mind to his that the memory of St. Paul's prophecy concerning "the younger widows" flashed.

Dr. Garfoyle throttled the thought with a sense of personal contempt, and turned to her with his calm countenance unmoved; when she said with a quick, almost petulant, change of manner:

"Because I am not an ugly worn-out woman in a rusty black gown, like our respectable Pyes and Truppers, therefore do you conclude that I am personally unacquainted with the tragedies of life? Am I not in mourning too? I have never even worn a colored flower since my dear husband died;" and as she spoke she rearranged a bouquet of pure white orchid blossoms, which nestled in her bosom. "You see, I have not a scrap of color anywhere about me, only soft grays and black and white."

Nor had she, yet the circumstance did but throw into fuller relief the natural hues of her exquisite coloring. A tree full of pale apple-bloom, shining gloriously in the full sunshine of a June day, might as well have been said to be "in mourning" as this fresh beauty.

Dr. Garfoyle was not a man of a morbid turn of mind; but he had seen the underside of life too nearly, in its grim materialistic representations, to have any taste for heightening the imaginative effects of tragic events by dramatic representation; yet it did occur to him to question the possibility of the existence of genuine feeling beneath this outspokenness. Moreover, as a mere matter of taste, there was something antagonistic to refinement in the incongruity of Mrs. Goldenour's allusions, here, in the very midst of this festive scene. She should not have spoken of the tragedy of her life at all, while careless laughter and the buzz of animated conver-

sation were going on all around her. He drew his chair half an inch away from hers. It was as far as circumstances permitted him to go.

"To be as honest with you, Mrs. Goldenour," he said, "as you have been with me, I must confess that I also have been hearing of you this very afternoon from your sister-in-law, and my former friend, Mrs. Bratton-Fleming. In fact, in accordance with a suggestion contained in her letter, I had promised myself the honor of calling upon you. If you were disposed to receive me, I should now be doubly eager to avail myself of your permission to do so."

The fact that he had put down this very call as a cross to be taken up on a Friday somewhat embarrassed Dr. Garfoyle in the delivery of his speech—so difficult is it even for professors of divinity to keep a perfectly untripping tongue in ladies' society; as a consequence, he did not immediately notice its effect upon Mrs. Goldenour; but when, in the pause which should have been filled by her acceptance of his suggestion, no response came, he looked quickly at his fair neighbor for her answer, and saw no simulated, but a very real shade of displeasure upon her hitherto smiling countenance. It was quite clear that the lady was annoyed or offended. But Dr. Garfoyle had too little egoism to be easily discouraged by fancies. He gave her a few seconds in which to recover herself, and then he repeated quietly:

"May I then take it for granted that I have your permission to pay my respects to you at your lodgings, and perhaps you will then introduce me to your little son? I am a great lover of children."

"I don't suppose I shall be at home," she said with rude brevity; "I am always out in the afternoons. I have everything to see. One comes to a university town to stare at buildings, and to take tea in men's rooms; besides, I am here with a view to the October meeting. I have friends who are going to drive me to the heath. Still, you can of course come if you choose. I will tell Mrs. Pye to show you the boy."

With this deliberate piece of impertinence Mrs. Goldenour, as though utterly weary of Dr. Garfoyle and of his conversation, turned to the man on the other side of her, and devoted herself to getting up a flirtation with him during the rest of the dinner. And yet there had surely been a pathetic undertone even in her

lightest speech, which, Dr. Garfoyle felt, went to the deepest heart of the listener. To say that he was not disconcerted by the inexplicable change in her manner would be to say that he was more than human. Even a saint has probably nerves still capable of quivering at the touch of mortified self-love; and Dr. Garfoyle was by nature a sensitive man. Moreover, he was a gentleman to his heart's core, and it jarred upon his sense of fitness that any woman with pretensions to occupy a prominent place in society should permit herself the solecisms of speech and manner which this original stranger seemed to delight in. It was obvious that she said too much, that in her desire to be the cynosure of all eyes present, she used her gifts to attract attention; moreover, Dr. Garfoyle's taste suggested that she should have expressed her sense of the importance of his position by the inflections of her voice and not by calling him "Canon" at the end of five minutes' acquaintance; and yet were not her faults probably those of one brought up in the midst of a less rigid society? So argued the insular mind of the man, now left to the undisturbed consideration of his dinner by the withdrawal of her countenance.

The dining-table was indisputably handsome, the service was perfect, the appointments were irreproachable. The master of the college sat at the end of the board with the bishop's wife on his right hand, and the pictures of his predecessors looking down upon him from the walls; but this meal as a meal was as much to Dr. Garfoyle, and no more, than the midday repast shared with the curates and the housekeeper in the bare vicarage dining-room had been. These things lent no added zest to his enjoyment. As a man of position he was used to these luxurious repasts; but any added warmth which his disciplined nature gained was always due to the excitation of moral indignation or of sympathetic admiration, never to the mere prompting of appetite. Hence he was glad when the affair was over, and the gentlemen could join the ladies in the long drawing-room. They found the hostess, with her most dignified friends about her, seated in a circle round the large old-fashioned fireplace; the younger ladies occupying the embrasures of the window, or standing about in groups; one only was perfectly solitary, and that one Dr. Garfoyle's late companion at table.

Victoria Goldenour sat by herself at the upper end of the room,

on a sort of raised dais, exalted but remote ; she had taken possession of a Louis XV. chair, and with her feet on a footstool to match, she looked like a veritable queen in her isolation.

The bishop immediately engaged Dr. Garfoyle's attention in pursuance of a conversation inaugurated below ; but half an hour later, when the diocesan discussion was cut short by the necessity of taking leave of the hostess, in accordance with the early customs of university society, Dr. Garfoyle noted the fact that Mrs. Goldenour's throne was surrounded by every unappropriated man in the room ; and that, so long as she would hold her court, her admirers were evidently likely to remain unmoved by any intention to depart.

Through the deserted courts, over the picturesque bridge, by the narrow streets of the town, Dr. Garfoyle returned to his own vicarage, retaining all the way, as a beautiful picture, but as nothing more, the memory of the lovely woman seated in the antique chair, with a group of admiring men around her improvised throne.

It was early yet ; by half-past eleven he had got into an old coat, had aroused one of the students from a comfortable nap on the sofa, and had set him to work, to construe Greek. An hour later sleep conquered the young fellow. Then Dr. Garfoyle took a candle and went upstairs. Passing the first floor, which he reserved for his own use and that of his two curates, he paused at a door on the second landing. A discordant voice reached him of one shouting rather than speaking in harsh discordant tones—"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee ! . . . Lord, hear my voice !" "This is your hour and the power of darkness." These and other similar sentences were uttered over and over again, mingled with inarticulate utterances and what might be described as "howls of lamentation."

Dr. Garfoyle entered the room and approached the bed on which lay an old and singularly repulsive looking object, a woman paralyzed, blind, and of late deaf also. Disqualified by this complication of maladies for admission into any special asylum, her pre-eminence in misfortune had procured her the privilege of being held worthy to be cared for by Dr. Garfoyle himself. Now he stood silently by the bed and waited, lest he should break in upon

what was to her a silence wherein her solitary soul communed secretly with its Maker ; but the old woman instantly paused.

“Lor’, vicar,” she said, in harsh guttural tones, “how lovely sweet yer do smell ! Whatever company have yer been keeping ? It’s the smell of foreign climes and of spices divine. Come a-nigher and shift the pillows, do. Nurse, she have been in ; but she have not the gift the Lord has given to you for the making of crooked places straight and smooth ; and she allays reeks of drugs, she do ; and of ’orrid lime.” (She meant chloride of lime.) “But you come to me anointed with dewes of Hermon and the scent of flowers on this weary night.”

With careful and scientific precision Dr. Garfoyle arranged the bed-clothes and smoothed the pillows, using the highly trained skill acquired long ago in his hospital practice. Unlike most deaf people, Mrs. Pettit’s sense of taste and smell had become acuter, while that of hearing diminished until it was altogether lost. It was characteristic of the man that he was gratified at this fancied association of extravagance with penury. That his lovely neighbor at the Lodge table should all unwittingly have been compelled by his agency to lay her fragrant tribute at the shrine of misery, pleased his fancy. That Mrs. Goldenour’s luxurious expenditure should purchase the innocent pleasure of this bedridden creature, and that he should be the link of connection between the two, seemed to him a happily suggestive arrangement of circumstances. Useless to address the old woman—she would not have heard him—he put into her hand the handkerchief which had lain in his pocket pressed against Mrs. Goldenour’s perfumed draperies, that she might retain as long as possible the only pleasure of the senses yet left to her ; then he extended his hands in silent benediction over her, and left her in a state of ecstatic bliss, as compared with her previous condition.

“Birmingham,” he said, first knocking at and then opening the next door, “it is late. I cannot stop long with you to-night.”

“Then why knock, vicar ?” said a voice, interrupted by a distressing cough. “Have I lungs and breath to shout out ‘Come in’ ?”

A cassock lay upon the bed-clothes which covered the wasted figure of the man beneath.

"If you could persuade the old sinner in the next room, vicar, that the Almighty isn't quite as deaf as herself, you'd be doing me a service, sir," said the man, in the broken, irritable tones so familiar in certain forms of advanced phthisis. "As soon as I get about again," he continued, "I shall be thankful to hear the last of her sins. She's forever howling them out and deluding herself with the belief that she's whispering them in confession. I'd have more peace in a hospital, and better attendance too. That nurse has forgotten my syrup to-night."

"Do you wish me to procure your admittance into the hospital for incurables, Birmingham? I am quite ready to do so. It is the only one at which you can be received, as I have already told you."

"Incurables! And what may you mean by that, Dr. Garfoyle? Because a man is laid aside from the service of the church for a few weeks; because he cannot turn out early and late, before six, on these cold raw mornings, to have that damp church ready for your early celebrations, and after eight on reeking wet evenings for your communicants' lectures and what not, therefore you propose to cut him adrift, and cast him off. Are not they that have served the altar to be supported by the altar? That is what I should like to know! 'Incurable,' me! 'Hospital,' me! Why, I shall see out the man you've got as verger now. Wretched substitute the fellow is! no appearance, no style, not fit for the office, quite unsuited for a servant of the sanctuary!"

Here he was interrupted by a spasmodic fit of coughing.

Dr. Garfoyle went to the washstand, and pouring out the syrup handed him the glass. As soon as the man had recovered breath to speak at all, he continued:

"And I must ask you, vicar, to speak to the housekeeper to send me up another girl to serve my room, and not that pert jade Araminta; she minces over the floor and wags her head for all the world like a fly on the ceiling, and when I asked her for a drink of water she'd the nerve to bring it in a bedroom glass; I require a cut-glass tumbler from the pantry, and a siphon by my side, as I need not tell you, Dr. Garfoyle."

"You are too particular, my friend," said the doctor kindly.

But the invalid, unheeding, continued his complaints.

“And when you lay aside your weekday cassock as you should do now, sir, and take your best for daily use—it was getting rubbed when I was taken ill, and in the present verger’s hands must now be quite worn out—I’d be obliged to you, Dr. Garfoyle, to give your express orders that it should be brought up here to me. Being silk, it would be warmer for my wear when I do sit up a little ; my alpaca’s getting thin. I shiver in it, vicar, and that is a fact. I’m perished with the cold. I shall catch my death out of that cassock there.”

“Well, my friend, and where is the warm dressing-gown I sent you from my own wardrobe ?”

“A dressing-gown, sir, such as you directed the nurse to bring me, might be suitable enough for an invalid ; but I like to be dressed as I have always been, ready for the performance of my professional duties. I have never yet, sir, consented, you remember, to relinquish the duties of my office, nor shall I, sir, unless it is your deliberate wish to depose me. You’ve the power to do so, I believe ; the power and the right if you choose to exercise it ; if not, I intend to resume my post at Christmas.”

“As a doctor of medicine, Birmingham, I think it only right and wise to inform you that I doubt your being able to resume your work as you anticipate ; but meanwhile you are well housed, well fed, and well nursed, and must try to show yourself contented with what is done for you. Now I must wish you good-night.”

“Contented ! Curse him !” muttered the consumptive man, as Dr. Garfoyle closed the door. “Does he dare to come in here perfumed with essences, and gorged with dainties from his carnal and luxurious feasts, to insult me, and to gloat over me in my abasement ! Curse him, in the church and out of it ! May he never know the joys of home, nor the love of wife or child ! May——” but a violent fit of coughing cut short his maledictions, and when at length it was over the ex-verger fell back upon his pillow, an exhausted, almost an expiring man.

CHAPTER III

HER SON

FRIDAY being the day appointed for crosses, Dr. Garfoyle saw no reason to relinquish his intention of calling upon Mrs. Goldenour. The less acceptable his visit might be, the better the discipline for the day.

Accordingly, at the precise time noted in his memorandum book, he presented himself at the house indicated. He weakly hoped that the lady might be out ; such, however, appeared not to be the case. He was ushered up the dingy stairs into a drawing-room which he already knew, a married curate having occupied it recently for six months. The foundation facts of the room were familiar enough to Dr. Garfoyle, but he scarcely recognized it now, such a change had passed upon it. Everything ugly, vulgar, and cheap had disappeared. Flowers, books, lounges, pictures, screens, cushions, draperies, all were of another order to any which had graced that commonplace apartment before. The room announced the occupation no longer of people on a dull level of respectability, but represented the tastes of a woman of luxurious habits and of dainty feeling. Rose-colored curtains had replaced the dirty white ones common to the house, and in the warm atmosphere of the shaded room that subtle perfume which had intoxicated the blind paralytic's senses palpably floated and mingled with the breath of flowers. But the total effect was displeasing to Dr. Garfoyle's taste.

Mrs. Goldenour evidently intended to keep her visitor waiting. She was dressing herself up, he concluded. He consulted his watch once or twice, but without any impatience. His next engagement was at a fixed hour, and his call upon this lady would be regulated not by her caprice or convenience, but by the exigencies of a divinity lecture to be delivered at a quarter-past five to a class

of expectant students. He would give Mrs. Goldenour just so much of his time whether she kept him waiting or not, whether she were civil or the reverse. As a busy man he had always time for everything he undertook to do at all ; but then it was secured by not allowing one engagement to override another.

At length the door opened, and a middle-aged woman entered, gently pushing before her a delicate fair-haired boy. This was Mrs. Pye to a certainty, and she seemed ready to sink into the ground from anger and annoyance.

"Mrs. Goldenour said I was to tell you she had gone to church," she stammered, making no attempt to disguise the mendacity of the excuse.

Dr. Garfoyle accepted the situation with tact and courtesy. He sat down and made acquaintance with the child; as lovely a specimen of boyhood as might have been seen. He had a tender heart for all children, and this beautiful boy had from the moment of their first meeting an irresistible attraction for the solitary man.

Bruce Goldenour was nearly seven years old. His fair hair lay in shining rings upon his broad forehead ; beneath the serenity of a noble brow, his blue-gray eyes looked out with the fearlessness of utter innocence. There was no mere childish chubbiness, no ruddy roundness in the contour of the face ; each feature was delicately moulded, the nose, clear and straight in outline, the lips modelled with refinement and sensitively curved, the pretty little ears set close to the well-shaped head, which proudly bore the crown of an intellectual brow. Bruce Goldenour would never have been called a picturesque child ; he was something far better : a being full of quick thought and gentle feeling, graceful and gifted in an unusual degree. His childish soul shone out of the depths of his smiling eyes. His easy, winning movements announced the guidance of a finely responsive spirit, and gave him power over all discerning observers, the greater in that it was wielded with the unconscious freedom of youth. There were indeed strange depths in the luminous eyes wherein, as in some dark and fathomless sea, the memory of the unutterably sad and perfectly inexplicable mystery of anguish which his baby eyes had looked upon lay hidden. There was a look in this child's face which awed the sympathetic beholder into silent pity, a look expressive of the pleading

pathos of the unusually thoughtful nature. He had indeed dreamt and brooded over the mystery of death which he had witnessed, until the memory of it had sunk into his very soul, weighting his unspoken thought with questions to which there could be no replies, for his or any other human heart.

The sight of the boy cast a spell over Dr. Garfoyle's mind. Henceforth he would find it impossible to forget either the mother or the child. The image of this perfect candor and serene intelligence was to haunt his memory like the lovely vision of a dream. He to whom all children, for childhood's sake, were dear ; he who individualized even the unattractive urchins who filled his parish schools with clamor ; he in whom a singularly tender sense of fatherhood, remaining unatrophied by the repression of long years, responded to the claim of any child, at the aspect of this little son of Mrs. Goldenour's surrendered his full soul to love and benediction.

Bruce was friendly though not communicative, yielding readily to Dr. Garfoyle's persuasive power. He had heard of Shadrach Trupper and of his wonderful voice, from the partial account of Shadrach's mother, and he expressed a wish to come and see the other boy, whose papa he naturally concluded that he saw before him. This innocent mistake caused Mrs. Pye agonies of embarrassment ; and Dr. Garfoyle, unwilling to prolong the situation, produced his card-case and prepared to depart. A rustle outside the imperfectly closed door, and a slight sound as of suppressed laughter, did not escape his ears as he bade the nurse and child good-by ; and the door of the adjoining room was unmistakably closed as he crossed the landing. He was, however, so very nearly indifferent that the fraction of annoyance he experienced might well be debited to the score of a Friday.

Dr. Garfoyle was in very good time for his lecture ; rather too early, in fact ; so, as he did not care to sit dumbly facing his audience until the quarter struck, he turned into the reading-room at the club, and glanced over his notes. His lectures were some of the best attended in the university, not only by men of whom attendance was required to fit them for taking a degree, but by serious men of all standings. Many ladies also were fond of using their privilege to put in an appearance. Theology was a subject

they thought they could understand ; at any rate, they felt it might do them good. So Dr. Garfoyle was well used to seeing rows of ladies with composed faces gazing more or less intently at him as he addressed his class. Glancing up as he commenced his lecture this October afternoon, he was, however, distinctly surprised to see, in the most conspicuous place which custom permitted her to occupy, the very lady who had just refused to receive his civil call.

Mrs. Goldenour had got herself up with a sobriety of costume which she probably considered suitable for the occasion ; none the less was it impossible for her to look like any ordinary matron present ; and the eyes of any man once surprised by a glance at her lovely but demure countenance were perpetually turning in that direction.

A vainer man might have been gratified or annoyed by the inexplicability of the lady's conduct ; but Dr. Garfoyle simply cared nothing about it. He thought of her, however, as Bruce Goldenour's mother ; and was distinctly less indifferent to her than he had been before. He concluded his lecture, shut up his note-book, gave her time to depart with the rest of the audience, and took his way back to his vicarage.

To be shortsighted is a drawback not entirely without its compensating balance in a place where members of the same society daily or hourly perambulate a given and restricted area. Few men care to convert their hurried passage to lecture-room or library, to hospital, club, or domicile, into a circumstantial progress, bowing to right and left to the men and women of their ordinary acquaintance. Hence a reputation for being too short-sighted to recognize anybody is not without its decided conveniences in a university town. Now without his spectacles this was Dr. Garfoyle's unassumed position ; with them he could generalize as well as anybody. As he had therefore learnt by experience to value the advantages of his disadvantages, he carefully refrained, whenever he took his walks abroad, from correcting his infirmity of sight by adventitious aid. His spectacles were carefully hidden in his pocket when he left the divinity schools. Suddenly a thought struck him, and he put them on.

Yes, he had been none too soon ; there was Mrs. Goldenour

walking on a little way ahead of him. She was going quite slowly too, as though she wished to be overtaken by someone. There was something not exactly free, and yet singularly unconventional and elastic about her gait and carriage, which at once distinguished her from the ordinary type of Englishwomen by which she was surrounded. And it was this complete self-possession, this unusualness of air and manner, which, together with the striking outlines of her figure, and the poise of her pretty head, rendered her noticeable, even before the impression was confirmed by the sight of her face. Moreover, she displayed little characteristic peculiarities of gesture and manner in society which, once noted, fascinated the observer, who caught himself eagerly watching for their bewitching repetition.

Thanks to his spectacles, Dr. Garfoyle did not overtake Mrs. Goldenour until by a turn in the road she was lost to sight ; then he took a cross-cut and got home in safety, congratulating himself as a wise man should do on his presence of mind. But the next morning he had occasion to go to the Senate House ; and on his return, as he traversed the Newmarket Road, it struck him that there was an unusual stir and bustle pervading that somewhat dubious locality. Smarter vehicles and swifter horses than he was accustomed to see were passing through his dingy parish. He was too utterly ignorant of racing matters to remember that it was the day of the first October meeting ; but he had just come to the slow conclusion that something must be up on the heath, when a dashing turn-out of the Newmarket cart order was suddenly pulled up in the roadway, and a ringing feminine voice was heard exclaiming :

“ Oh, Dr. Garfoyle, Dr. Garfoyle, pray stop a minute ; you are the very person I most wanted to see. Oh, Mr. Pengelley ! won't your horses stand ? I do so want to speak to Dr. Garfoyle ! ”

To the imperfect vision of the gentleman thus addressed, Mrs. Goldenour presented much the appearance of a very animated fashion-plate, but when he stepped out into the roadway he recognized both the lady, the equipage, and the gentleman by whom it was driven.

Mr. John Pengelley was the eldest son of a family, half squires, half gentlemen-farmers, who owned a considerable property on the

Huntingdon side of Cambridgeshire, some miles out of the town. And the lady saved him any further trouble by exclaiming :

“Have you forgotten me already, Dr. Garfoyle? Did I not tell you at that dignified dinner-party that I was going to make a progress through your parish on my way to Newmarket? I do not admire what I have seen of it, and I wish you promotion to a bishopric at once. Dear me, these horses! Mr. Pengelley, do throw away that cigar, and give your mind to keeping them steady for one minute more.”

The man by her side, whose impatience of the delay had certainly been communicated to his horses, laughed and signed to the groom at their heads to restrain the nervous fidgeting of which his fair companion complained, and which had undoubtedly been provoked by his own unsympathetic manipulation of the reins.

“What I wanted to say, Dr. Garfoyle, was only just this : that I believe you will find my little boy at play on your lawn, and that I hope you will overlook him, if you are not pleased to see him. I believe you kindly made acquaintance with him, on the day when you honored me with a call, and I was unfortunately gone to church.” She said this with a smile which lighted up two dimples in her dainty chin. “Bruce begged to go and see that boy with a voice and a Bible name ; but pray despatch him and Pye home again if they are in anyone’s way. No, really ! how nice of you to have been so taken by the child. One instant, Mr. Pengelley. Oh, dear, these horses ! Thanks so much ! I am coming to talk to you about that guild soon, you know, Dr. Garfoyle, the one I’m to join. Have you heard from Mrs. Bratton-Fleming again? No? Neither have I. Do you want to? I don’t ! If you are writing, pray don’t tell them that I’ve gone to Newmarket ;” and she waved her hand in a charming adieu.

All this was uttered in a dozen breaths, while the horses tossed their heads and flung the foam-flecks from their bits and fidgeted anxiously, incited thereto scientifically by the master of the equipage ; he, with a stolid air of exaggerated courtesy, divided his attention between the reins and an expiring cigar, which he had removed from his lips in deference to Dr. Garfoyle’s presence at their side. The encounter created a good deal of interest in the roadway, whence it was watched by curious people standing at

their cottage doors, and passing their time by watching the unusual traffic.

“Know her sort !” said one woman to another, as Dr. Garfoyle retreated hastily with assurances of welcome for the boy. But the other shook her head, and answered as she shut her cottage door :

“I’d go bail for her, let her be who she may, so long as he smiles on her as he did but now.”

Dr. Garfoyle’s benign countenance did indeed display only unruffled serenity as he turned away. The easy assimilation of personal annoyances, without display of moral indigestion, he had long recognized as an elementary function of self-discipline. As an attentive student of human nature and a man of varied experience, he was entirely of opinion that although Mrs. Goldenour, young and beautiful and a widow, might be disinclined to govern her conduct by the somewhat rigid code of etiquette imposed by circumstances upon the society in which he had found her, yet that to her own standard she was doubtless faithful enough.

The conventions of a necessarily restricted public opinion might well try the patience of a brilliant stranger, accustomed to freer states of society. So mused Dr. Garfoyle, as became a wise and entirely charitable man.

The vicarage garden was an oasis in the midst of a dense mass of small tenements. It was surrounded and overlooked on two sides by miserable houses ; the church stood at an angle to the vicarage, separated from it only by a paved yard, upon which four poplars stood, together with a copper beech and a luxuriant silver aspen, in whose wind-stirred branches sun and shade were one, as in the rippling, changing motion of a gentle summer sea. When, soon after he took up his abode at the vicarage, Dr. Garfoyle came across the poet Blake’s narrative of his vision of angels, seen filling a tree on a June day, he felt that it must have been in some such tree as this that the inspired boy surprised the secret of the divine vitality in the life of nature ; no other tree or plant ever seemed to him so indwelt with the vital principle as this, his favorite aspen.

Opposite the church the eye obtained some relief from the sight of squalid dwellings by a long stretch of green, first over a field devoted by the present vicar to purposes of parish recreation, then

over the garden of the workhouse, and the cemetery grounds beyond. By heightening the brick walls which surrounded his garden and field, Dr. Garfoyle might have ensured the privacy of his domain, and William Birmingham, the ex-verger and quondam custodian of the vicarage grounds, constantly suggested the erection of a latticed screen ; but Dr. Garfoyle preferred that the women from the cottages opposite should sit at their windows on summer evenings and look on at the games of cricket which their lads played in the field. He liked to see rows of old people sunning themselves on the surrounding benches, and encouraged Shadrach to bring in selected children to disport themselves upon the grass.

In these bright autumn days the garden was resplendent with old-fashioned flowers ; rows of hollyhocks and dahlias stood under the walls, beds of brightly colored plants gladdened the eye, the house itself was covered with a luxuriant wealth of creeper with crimson leaves and white and purple flowers. Around it was a raised asphalted path with benches set at intervals ; upon one of these benches Dr. Garfoyle had seated himself, picking up a daily paper, flung there by one of the curates now engaged in a cheerful game of tennis on one of the courts below ; and pleasant to his ear was the musical sound of childish laughter mingling with the young men's eager shouts.

Bruce Goldenour and Shadrach Trupper were spinning tops close to him, upon the asphalt ; but Dr. Garfoyle knew better than to spoil his chances of a closer friendship with the rare boy by soliciting his acquaintance at once. The man who would make friends with any innocent furred or feathered creature, be it bird or even insect, must suppress himself, he must look at them only as if he saw them not ; must be very patient and very still ; move so much as an eyelash, and the frightened bird will fly away ; sit as though you have no thought of it and its ways, and it will by degrees approach as it becomes convinced that you have no disposition to use the powers you possess against it, and in the end it will lay aside its armor of fear, and will even betray to you unwittingly the secret of its nest, the home of its heart. Everything that is young and weak requires of a man that he make himself young and weak with it, if he would win it. So Dr. Garfoyle sat behind his paper screen and did not at first notice Bruce Goldenour's presence ; but

he put his spectacles on, with which he could see as well as anybody, and sideways he observed the contrast between the two children.

Shadrach was a wholesome looking boy ; his cheeks were rosy as a Baldwin apple, his head was like a bullet, and his frame was stout and strong. His mother called his hair "fair," but it was a pale brown, and severely tonsured by her scissors ; the other child was very pale, but there was nothing sickly in his appearance. From his mother he had inherited the transparent hue of the fair skin beneath which the blue veins were pencilled like the markings upon the petals of the wood-sorrel. Delicate he certainly was, but Dr. Garfoyle, observing him professionally, came to the conclusion that the robust child probably possessed a constitution more prone to disease. Bruce's delicious laughter and untiring energy bespoke the activity of a mind upon which conceptions falling incessantly like inspirations compelled their expression by the ever agile frame. Dr. Garfoyle noted, too, that in their various games, where the sturdy boy shrank from laziness or grew inert from lack of mental impulse, this child of fragile make showed untiring pluck and spirit, together with remarkable fertility of resource.

From time to time scraps of the boys' conversation reached Dr. Garfoyle's ears as he sat meditating rather than reading in the autumn sunlight, and apparently taking no notice of them ; boy-like they were not aware of the far-reaching compass of their own young voices. Shadrach was the chief speaker, and his voice, so lovely in song, had a distressing twang of local dialect, which often caused his hearers to wish that he were like a bird gifted with the power of song, but not kept to talk. The other boy maintained a sensitive reserve about his own affairs ; but Shadrach knew nothing of such reticence, nor was he in the least awed by the vicar's presence.

"He is not my papa," said Shadrach boastfully. "My papa was a very rich man ; he had a splendid place in the country ; he had four horses and a gig and a cart ; and we'd lots of fields and pigs, and cows and a calf, and ducks and hens, and eggs and turnips, and mother never did any work, only looked after the servants ; but Dr. Garfoyle is just the vicar, that's all. My mother is a lady, she only does the housekeeping here to oblige Dr. Garfoyle ; she does the cooking, but 'Minta and all the girls do the rest."

Bruce paused a minute in his occupations to exclaim :

“ Who is 'Minta ? ”

“ The eldest of all the girls. It was her birthday yesterday, and nurse gave her a money-box with sixpence in it ‘ to teach her economy. ’ ”

“ How would it teach her that ? ” asked Bruce.

“ Oh, I don't know. I suppose it would do her good without her knowing it, like saying your prayers or going to church ; but what are you going to be when you are a man ? ”

“ I am going into the army, ” said Bruce, carefully depositing a large toad, which he had been caressing, beneath an inverted flower-pot.

“ What army ? The Salvation Army or the Church Army, or are you going to be a redcoat ? I am going to be a clergyman, I am. Mother says she'll save up and send me to college ; and then when they make Dr. Garfoyle a bishop I shall be vicar choral of his cathedral. ”

At this point Dr. Garfoyle read an article on the state of the Church in Wales ; when his attention was again aroused he heard from the stranger child's pure intonations :

“ Oh, no ! my mother says we are quite poor. ”

“ Then did some lady give your mother the things you have on ? ”

“ Shadrach, ” interrupted the vicar, “ what have you boys got under that flower-pot ? ”

“ A toad, ” said Bruce Goldenour eagerly, bringing it up for admiration. “ And I have made him a little ladder of twigs, so that he can go out for a walk when he likes. See how beautifully yellow he is underneath, if you have got time to look, sir. Your garden is so beautiful, may I come here again ? ”

While Mrs. Trupper's boy discoursed, out of the shallowness of his little vulgar soul, about the domestic arrangements of the vicarage, and the characteristics of its numerous inhabitants, and related his own and his mother's petty ambitions, the other child now and then lifted his soft eyes, wherein veiled suggestions of questioning thought lurked, and fixed them on the inexpressive countenance of his companion, with mild wonder but with no response. The boys had nothing in common. Time and space could not have separated them more effectually than nature had

already done. The one with no awakened life whatever beyond the mere material, his song voice alone the only hint of any possible awakening into a better ventilated region of feeling being in store for him ; the other sensitive, reticent, refined, poetic, with the conscious pulse of pain already throbbing within his childish soul.

“This boy,” so Dr. Garfoyle felt, “a man might love as his own. Here was a child to prize and wait for. Surely,” he thought, “it was such a child as this that, centuries ago, the Master took and set in the midst of jarring men, that by the mere service of a lovely and innocent personality he might heal and uplift their age-worn hearts !”

But if Shadrach’s trying utterances were to be taken as faithful representations of his poor mother’s low-toned mind, must not the charm of the other’s nature be held as in the same measure due to the mother who had borne and reared him ? So mused Dr. Garfoyle, and he began sincerely to desire that Mrs. Goldenour might keep her promise of calling to enroll herself among the guild of widows.

But a week passed, and she came not. During that week, Dr. Garfoyle thought of Mrs. Goldenour and of her boy so constantly that he might have been said to be always thinking of them ; their existence had already become a foundation fact of his mind. The near future always seemed to hold another meeting with them.

CHAPTER IV

SOME CONFESSIONS

It was a pouring wet day, rivers of rain ran down the windows, seas of mud filled the streets. It was a day on which to lose heart and hope, to despond, to think of one’s debts and one’s sins, to take a pessimistic view of life, and to picture heaven as an Eastern desert wherein never a drop of water fell.

Dr. Garfoyle sat at his study table ; he had had an early fire lighted, and it smoked ; the wood was damp, and drops of rain fell down the chimney and sputtered as they touched the feeble flame. He was preparing an address for his district visitors’ meeting ; but he

felt the influence of the weather, and there was not one of the whole thirty upon whom his mind rested with any sense of refreshment, in its present condition. He wondered if the people liked their visits as little as he did himself, and thought it even probable.

Suddenly Araminta hit the door with a vigor which made him jump. He cried :

“Come in,” and she entered dubiously.

“A district lady, sir.”

“Show her into the class-room then, and ask her to wait. It is not time for the meeting, for three-quarters of an hour.”

“Please, sir, she says she knows that ; but she wants to speak to you about a person in distress before the others come.”

“Show her in here, then,” he said, resigning himself with a suppressed sigh. He well knew the persistency of the ordinary district dame.

She came in, and she was Mrs. Goldenour.

Dropping the disguise of a waterproof cloak, she stood before him, laughing at his surprise ; and she was a conception, a thought, a dream in gray, with a wreath of white chrysanthemums bound by a velvet bow, and a dusky moth in her bright brown hair. She extended both hands with a pretty deprecating gesture ; he took them, and she dropped into an easy-chair by the fire, which suddenly sprang up into a brilliant blaze ; she put one dainty little foot upon the fender ; he seized the poker and expressed the ferment of feeling which the apparition stirred in him, by causing a prolonged agitation among the coals.

“Dr. Garfoyle,” she said, “I intrude. I know I do. I am so penitent ; but I am come to say good-by. I go away to-morrow.”

He started and dropped the poker with a clatter. She saw her advantage and pressed it home.

“Yes, I am going quite away, and you can pay your district visits, and attend your parish teas, and dine at college lodges, and give your learned lectures, and never have to linger lest you overtake me. Are you not thankful ? I can see that you are. I have been so rude. I have treated you—well, worse than any woman ever did before. Say, is it not so ? I am sure of it. Did any woman in your life ever dare to be so rude to you as I have been ?

No, I know you cannot say it, for you never lie politely. Tell me, did any woman ever venture long ago, when you were young, to—well, to peep through the crevice of a door and laugh, and say she'd gone to church, when you were kind enough to call on her? And yet, how I know it I can't say, but I am very sure of this, that the woman has lived and died who has made you far more miserable than it is likely I shall ever do."

"Then why did you do it?" he asked, more moved than he had been for twenty years, by her daring words.

"Why did I do it? Simply this—to think that you did not guess at once—well, the best of men are slow! Because I was foolish enough to imagine you capable of playing the spy for Mrs. Bratton-Fleming and my husband's family—because I thought that you might write to her, and tell her how I went to Newmarket with Mr. John Pengelley and his friends, and how I could not pay my way. As if you were not quite too big a don to stoop to talk of poor me."

"I have not talked about you, Mrs. Goldenour; but certainly I have thought much of you and your lovely boy since we last met," Dr. Garfoyle said, melting beneath the influence of her happy, easy manner. It was impossible to resist Victoria Goldenour when she took pains to be accepted.

"Oh, that dinner-party!" she said, settling herself comfortably in her chair, and picking up a treatise on "Jewish Sanitation" as a shield from the fire. "And that old master's wife, how on earth was I to know that what she said she meant? Does anyone in any other quarter of the world ask you to dinner at a quarter to eight, and sit down at seven forty-five? And that bishop's wife! I see her still, with a grass green satin gown too tight for her portly frame, and a bunch of yellow poppies in her faded hair! and, do you know what happened, Dr. Garfoyle, after you were gone? No, of course you don't; but you might guess. Do you know they couldn't get rid of me? I expected the lady of the lodge would offer to lend me things, and have them show me up to bed. How late do you suppose I had ordered my cab? Why, at eleven! Fancy a decent woman out dining alone at a college lodge and not back at home by eleven! Half an hour after every soul was gone did I sit in that dark room below, with a maid and a chamber candle! I did indeed! I was got downstairs. Public

opinion squeezed me out above. I was wished good-by to before I was gone, I was indeed. Such inhospitable manners I never met with before."

Dr. Garfoyle regarded her lovely but petulant face with one of his most benign smiles.

"Perhaps," he said, "it is as well that you are going away. You cannot appreciate our virtues ; and there are, I am quite prepared to believe, ways in which we are quite unworthy of you here, though we might learn to understand each other better if you stayed. Still, of this one thing I am very sure, that we are none of us company as good for you as the society of your boy. Permit me to express to you my very genuine feeling that any woman has enough to live for, without fashionable society, as the mother of such a rarely attractive child. And further, I am indeed sure that she must have learnt some true and tender lessons in life before she could have been consciously instrumental in making him what he evidently is."

She dropped her tract, folded her delicately gloved hands in her lap, and looked up at the broad and candid countenance which smiled upon her from the opposite side of the fireplace, with a pretty mixture of surprise and awe.

"Bruce is indeed beautiful," she said, while the warm color flooded her sweet face, and a soft light shone through tears in her gray eyes. "He is indeed a treasure, but it is to his father that he owes his soul; I gave him nothing better than his complexion, I am sure. He is indeed my best companion ; night and day he has been cherished by me. He has never left me since his father died. I have often longed to lay my head upon the ground beneath his little feet, simply to pray to him for the healing and benediction of his touch ; but the child is so sensitive that I sometimes fear lest even my very love should hurt him."

"Many a woman's passion hurts her child," said Dr. Garfoyle thoughtfully ; "and a widowed mother is so apt to take her lost husband's little son and to pour out at his childish feet all the treasures of her empty heart. If she does this, she will surely injure and she may, indeed, kill her child."

"Shall I confess to you?" she said. "They tell me you hear many confessions."

"But I am not bound to secrecy," said Dr. Garfoyle, smiling, "when they are spontaneously made to me by my study fire."

"No matter, only listen for five minutes more. This is what I have come to talk to you about; you are wise, you are good, you are true; if you have no woman about you it is not because the love of women and of little children is foreign to your heart. Where did you learn such a discerning affection for a child?"

"From the memory of my own mother," he said. "She also was a widow, and I was her only child. All the things I say to you I learned from the wisdom and clear-sightedness which distinguished her. The widowed mother of an only child must hold her son, Mrs. Goldenour, as though she held him not; her embrace must be a force which builds up and upholds the child; never a grasp which makes his tender nature the support of her own weakness. I tell you that she had better even give him a careless hearty blow than pour into his baby soul the bitter rivers of her own passion, and sear his childish heart with the scalding tears of her own grief. When you feel tempted to act as you say you do at times, you must brace yourself up for your boy's sake; you must give him some light merry word, try some little joke to make him laugh, even possibly reprove him briskly for some childish fault."

"Dr. Garfoyle," she said, her face growing white and her eyes intently fixed upon his countenance, her very soul in the words that seemed to force themselves from her unwilling lips, "do you know that Bruce saw his father killed? Think of it! His little garments were dyed all over with his father's blood!" Shuddering, she hid her face in her hands! "Ah, I cannot tell you more! Oh, my God—his little face, and those tender hands; think of it, sir! I washed them white with my tears! Can any child so sensitive have seen what he has seen and live? And ever since I have read the memory of it in his eyes. I have seen it in those two sharp lines of pain so unnaturally marked around his baby mouth. He will never forget it, and he will die!"

"I think not; with proper care, with right management," said Dr. Garfoyle considerately.

"Can you advise me? Can you help me with the child? I am alone, and I am unable. I have no other aim in life than the child's good. I play, yes, I know I do. I am young, and I amuse

myself. I laugh, and people think perhaps I have forgotten all my past ; but all the while the passion of fear is tearing at my heart, coming nearer every day, lest having lost my husband I should lose Bruce also. Dr. Garfoyle, I fear it is indeed true that his father's death has killed the child. If you had seen him as he was before, you would know that I speak the truth. If I do foolish things it is because I would forget ; because I am driven by fear and pain."

"Is that all ?" he asked gently.

"No !" she said, suddenly lifting up her head and smiling through her tears, "I will be quite honest with you, for you deserve it. It is not all ; I have a passionate love of enjoyment. I was meant to enjoy my life. Life itself is good to me, and I would make the most of it. I must have my life ; though as yet I don't see how. Now you know why I sent Bruce here the other day ; I wanted you to see him and observe him. I trusted that afterward you would advise me, that you might help me with him. I wanted the advice of some man who was wise and kind, and I have chosen you. At first I thought you the very last man that I should consult, because you were Mrs. Bratton-Fleming's friend ; but I am not a stupid woman ; I can see when I have been mistaken, as I was in entertaining such petty thoughts of you. A man in your position has something else to do than to waste his time on strangers, and I have no claim on you ; only when people speak of you they say that it is precisely those who have no claim on you that you are apt to make your special care."

"Surely the need is the claim," said Dr. Garfoyle, moved beyond his wont. But at the same time he heard the district visitors beginning to arrive, and knew that his time was limited. "But what can I do for you ?" he asked, under the influence of this impression. "You have already told me that you leave to-morrow."

"I only go because I cannot stay," she said ; "I do not give my lodgings up, for the simple reason that I cannot pay my bill. I am ashamed to have to confess this to you, but if you have heard anything of my circumstances at all from Mrs. Bratton-Fleming, you will have learnt that my dear husband was unable to leave me more than an annuity of fifty pounds a year, for which he had insured his life ; and that the two families of Goldenour and Bruce make up

an allowance of three hundred a year for us between them. The child's grandfather, Sir Peregrine Goldenour, is dead and done for, but he had an elder son, Peregrine, who is married, and has a large family of boys ; Frank was only the second son, so a hundred and fifty a year is all he would do for us. Then, on my side, my parents are dead ; my father came to grief in Australia and died a ruined man ; but my grandfather, Sir Victor Bruce, is alive and he is generous to us now and then. Sometimes he will hear reason, so it is to him I am going. He must give me something, if I take the trouble to go and stay with him at Ealing Hall. But I can't take Bruce with me ; Sir Victor is old, and won't stand children. Yet I am not quite happy in leaving him here with Pye. I have never parted with him before."

"Why not let him come here?" said Dr. Garfoyle. "It would give me an excellent opportunity of getting to know the child better, and I should be more able to advise you with him afterward, if I had him under my eye for a short time. Also the sisters are anxious to be together for a while—Mrs. Pye and Trupper, I mean. Your boy shall be a precious charge to me. It is not possible for me to tell you how strong a feeling I have for little children. It is inborn in my nature."

"But I know it," she cried, "without your telling me, and that is why I am here. For years, indeed ever since my dear husband died, I have been seeking for someone who would, without being only a doctor, regard me simply as the child's mother and help me with the boy. Of late he has grown more nervous than ever, and my fears have increased likewise. I will bring him to you. It is just what I should desire. You are a doctor, but you are also a lover of children. You are a kind and wise man, and I am content and glad to let him come. But there is one point about which I am doubtful, forgive my alluding to it ; must he associate with that boy Shadrach? Could we not draw the line at association with that common, vulgar boy?"

"Whatever lines must be drawn," responded Dr. Garfoyle warmly, "pray do not let us draw them between one little child and another. At least allow every child to feel himself a denizen of his Father's house in this beautiful world of ours, and to recognize in every other child a playmate and a brother ! It is a poisonous and

infectious doctrine which would separate them. I pray you do not sin thus against your little son, Mrs. Goldenour."

"But the difference in origin—consider that, Dr. Garfoyle! Both the Goldenours and the Bruces have pedigrees as long as my child's body. I might wrap him in the roll of his ancestors if I chose."

"If you compute only your boy's sixteen ancestors, four generations back, you will find it as difficult to assign the precise quality of your, or of any child's parental inheritance, Mrs. Goldenour, as to perform a complex operation of chemical analysis. You will have to abandon that plea, and to rely upon questions of actual disposition and character; and there Shadrach, though manifestly very inferior to Bruce, will do your son no harm."

"Well," she said then, "so let it be. I will write to you, and will return as soon as ever I am able; meanwhile, the boy shall come to you. And I am grateful. Now, what can *I* do for *you*? Find out something quickly, and find it now; my time is all but up. Don't be too proud to own that even I might serve you in my turn."

As she spoke she rose and looked up at him in her pleading loveliness. He also rose, expecting Araminta's summons every second.

"What is there, now?" she said impatiently; "command me! Let it be for yourself, if it may be; if not, for someone whom you care for. If there is any service I can render for anyone you are interested in, pray say it. Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Yes," he said suddenly; "there is something you can do. There is one I am interested in, whom you can serve. You too can help me. She is upstairs, ill in mind and body. Come now. Come and do your best for one who is in bitter need."

She hung back a little.

"But I cannot talk religion," she said. "And you have to talk good to sick people, don't you?"

"You need not speak to her; she will not hear you," he answered.

"Is she only to look at me then? Is the sight of me enough to please her?"

"She will neither see nor hear you," he replied. "Come."

"But am I to give her money? I have none for myself," she once more objected.

"She has no use for money. She has all she needs," he said. "Come, follow me. You have nothing to do but to stand by her bed, and it shall be your acknowledgment of all that I may be able to do, or wish to do, for you. By your mere presence you will help to soothe and bless her."

Mrs. Goldenour looked puzzled, but followed her guide.

Out in the hall the district ladies crowded past them as they ascended the stairs; and the second curate, who was ushering them in, gazed after the beautiful apparition, and reflected that he too might become a canon; and he determined that when he did, he would always hear confessions by his study fire. And since he at present believed in the celibacy of the clergy, he forgot that by that time he might be married and the father of ten clamorous children. The district ladies all stared; Dr. Garfoyle had never said he had a niece or younger sister who might be staying in the house. "Who could it be? Going up to the second floor too! What might it mean?"

Meanwhile Dr. Garfoyle and his companion had reached the door of the paralytic's room, where they heard her pouring out her doubts, as was her wont, aloud.

"Lord! Thomas saw Thee. He felt the wound in Thy side! I see nothing, Lord! I hear nothing. I am alive, but I am already as one who lies in the grave! Darkness and silence surround me! Where art Thou? By what tokens wilt Thou make Thyself known to me? Where are these signs of Thy Being for me? I cannot even hear my own voice cry unto Thee. I am in a place of darkness, and the night encompasses me! Wilt thou leave my soul in the misery of this hell? Others by their senses reach Thee; so once did I! But even the dead heard Thy voice and felt Thy touch. Lord, I am dead, reach me in this living tomb!"

Victoria Goldenour listened and heard. Her eyes grew wide with awe.

"Who is it?" she questioned. "And what can I do?"

"Go in and stand by her side."

"And you will come too?" she entreated.

"No, I remain here."

She went immediately, as though she were an obedient child. The harsh voice died away in inarticulate murmurings ; then the silence grew complete. Dr. Garfoyle remained by the door and watched. Then, as the rapture of gratified impression grew, the sufferer clasped her hands.

“An angel comes to me ! The angel of the Lord ! A token for me ; how sweet the perfume !”

Victoria was standing as near to the bed as she had at present dared to go ; but she had carefully kept out of the old woman’s reach. Now she turned and said to Dr. Garfoyle :

“It is my Southern perfume ; from the roots of flowers in our Australian grounds, made from a recipe all our own and always used by me. She cannot know that I am here by any other means.”

But the paralyzed creature’s delight increased as the sweet atmosphere enveloped her.

“Go nearer,” Dr. Garfoyle said, “let her feel that you are in the flesh.”

“An answer to my prayer, a sign for me, even for me,” the words came from the bed ; “He is ! and His messenger has come to me !”

Touched by the simple rapture, and anxious to undeceive the poor creature, Mrs. Goldenour went nearer to her and laid a gentle hand upon her forehead ; but the old woman lay in an ecstasy, while rivers of joyful tears rained from her sightless eyes.

“How can I undeceive her ?” she asked, turning to Dr. Garfoyle in distress. “You hear, she thinks she has received an answer to her prayers. She takes me for an actual angel sent to her. What can be done about it ? How can I make her understand ?”

“There is no way,” he said ; “and after all are you not a messenger of love and comfort sent her in her loneliness ?”

“Let me at least be all I can be to her, then,” she said. And in perplexity and dismay the lovely visitor stooped and kissed the haggard, wrinkled brow ; and when she raised her head, her eyes were wet with tears of feeling.

“Now, come ; you have done all that you can, and I thank you,” said Dr. Garfoyle. “But my time is up, I must go ; they are waiting for me in the class-room.”

"But you have not enrolled me in that guild," she said, recovering herself and smiling through her tears.

"You have enrolled yourself," he answered with a sympathetic adieu.

And yet, if all the thirty admirable women assembled round the table, with their Bibles opened before them, waiting for his anticipated address, had walked upstairs in a body, and had all tenderly embraced Mrs. Pettit, Dr. Garfoyle would not have thought there was anything particularly interesting about it. Neither would there have been ; since the spirit which conceived the thought, and the lips which executed it, belonged to Victoria Goldenour and to her alone.

Victoria turned out into the dirty, dripping roadway. The rain still poured in torrents, the atmosphere was dark and heavy. Everything around her looked squalid and miserable ; what she supposed to be the very dregs and scum of human life circulated around her ; and she had a passion for all beautiful and artistic things, for all the glory and color of love and life. An immediate reaction set in. She was intensely overwrought ; strung up to a pitch of moral feeling which was the result of being physically starved of emotion. She turned her face, on which the tears yet shone, up to the dripping heavens ; the hood of Mrs. Pye's borrowed cloak fell back from the white wreath upon her bright hair, and the rain followed the channel of tears down her pale cheeks. Her lips felt dry and defiled by the touch of the yellow parchment skin of the old crone, damp as it had been with the dews of spiritual agony. She took her scented handkerchief and scrubbed them till they were scarlet as the tassels of a begonia flower. She positively yearned for some pure stream in which to wash them clean again, but only a noxious gutter ran by the greasy pavement, and in it filthy children played ; such children as Dr. Garfoyle had actually dared to count in the same world with Bruce as "brothers in one Father's home."

A squalid child escaped from a cottage doorway and fell right across her path ; by an irresistible impulse she pushed it quickly with her foot as it lay sprawling in the mud ; she kicked it, in fact ; it was small and weak, and it rolled over and splashed with a cry into the gutter. There it stemmed a little heap of refuse,

and the impure torrent swirled and eddied round its abject form. A pang of regret shot through Victoria ; filthy as it was it is probable that she would at once have picked it up ; but its mother came out and cursed her for her conduct, and its elder brother lifted it up and twirled it like a mop over the dripping pavement, while its screams jarred upon her overstrung nerves as she hurried on.

At the turning of the road she had to wait for a hansom cab to pass. It was being driven rapidly in the opposite direction. At once she heard her name called by a man's clear strong voice.

"Mrs. Goldenour, Mrs. Goldenour ! In the name of all that's good, what brings you here ?" And the vehicle was pulled up so hastily that the powerful horse nearly fell back on his haunches. Mr. John Pengelley was inside it, and springing out as lightly as his very considerable bulk would allow, he stood by Victoria's side. "Get in, Mrs. Goldenour ! Get in," he exclaimed, "out of this beastly rain. There's loads of room. I am only going a mile further down the road, to see if they have executed an order I gave them at the tile works, for a lot of channelled tiles for the roofing of my new stables. I have just been leaving birds and fruit at your quarters.

"Why, what is the matter with you ?" he asked in a concerned tone, as he subsided into the cab, of which he occupied three-quarters of the seat, by her side. "What on earth brings you down here in the pouring rain ? Have you been taking divinity lessons ? If so, I hope they have been administered by the professor himself, and not by those awful cads the students ? But you are out of sorts ! I say, what is it ? What has happened ?"

"Nothing worse than that I have been taken for an angel," she said with a little hysterical laugh.

"And upon my soul you are one, you know, though I'd make it hot for any one of those young clerics who has presumed to tell you so, you understand."

"No ! No ! It is you who cannot understand other people, Mr. Pengelley ; you carry your own world with you wherever you go, and it is a world of fields and farms, of dogs and horses, of good dinners and choice cigars, of comfortable consciences, banker's balances, and sound slumbers."

"In which excellent condition, whether waking or sleeping, I adore you," he replied with a show of gallant laughter.

"And you are perfectly satisfied with yourself?"

"Why not, my sweet saint? You at least know no good reason to the contrary," said Mr. Pengelley, who had fallen in love very honestly with the beautiful woman by his side.

"I am not a saint, or, to be precise, I am sometimes half a saint and half a sinner, and, unlike you, I am never satisfied with myself as either. And yet it is really strange that one cannot enjoy life without repenting it? If it is wrong to have a good time, what's the use of being born? And why, on the other hand, when one is as good as gold and better, when one goes and joins a guild, consisting chiefly of moribund paupers, does one loathe one's self afterward as much as if one had instead gone and done the very nicest, wickedest thing one knew?"

"Upon my word, I believe they have caught and converted you down there," John Pengelley said in pity, gazing at her tear-stained, rain-washed face, so very near his own, with astonishment and admiration. "But, if so, you have come to the wrong man for ghostly comfort. 'Take it easy,' is my motto; the sum of all my philosophy and my religion, too, for that matter."

So saying, he smiled a superior smile, and ventured to lay his large hand soothingly upon her nervous fingers. He never was depressed himself except when he was overfed, and he fancied that he knew all about these morbid miseries of pretty women, and in the case of a widow especially their existence was only creditable to her, and their cure was obvious.

They drove to the tile-yard in the continuous downpour, and Mr. Pengelley got out and gave his orders, while his companion waited for him beneath the shield of an umbrella sticking out at the front of the cab. It was not an exhilarating situation. Then he returned and, closely pressed together side by side, they drove back to the town. Gradually Victoria relaxed her stiffness, and almost by imperceptible degrees she leaned more and more for support upon the strong man by her side, who was at once so robust and yet so tender to her weakness. Yet John Pengelley scarcely dared to indulge his affectionate disposition with native demonstrativeness; he felt that there was no root to this flower of bliss. He realized

that there would be no to-morrow to this momentary surrender of an impulsive nature. Even while yielding to the insistent longing for John Pengelley's outspoken and genuine sympathy, Victoria despised herself for the apparent encouragement she gave him.

"It should all end as it had begun," she told herself. "And was she not going away the next day, so what did it matter, after all?"

This was how she argued; yet when she got home, and John Pengelley had left her at the door of her lodgings, she wept anew in the solitude of her own room. She put her boy away from her till she reappeared with all tokens of tears or rain carefully removed from her lovely face. She must look as usual for *him*.

"Spiritual loves are too attenuated for me, and earthly loves are too material," she said inwardly. "In no love am I true to my own nature save in the love which I bear to my child."

Then she summoned Bruce, and, forgetting all wise resolves, sat down on the hearth-rug at his feet, and revelled in making herself young with him, and in courting the play of his innocent fingers in her hair. There was such healing in their touch. Bruce took some flowers from her bright crown of hair, but she snatched them from him and flung them into the fire.

"Not those," she said; "those are not fit for you, they are not worth having." In fact, they had been John Pengelley's, his offering in substitution of her dripping artificial wreath. "Here," she said, "are flowers for *you*," and she put into her boy's hand a bunch of late yellow roses which she snatched as she passed out of the vicarage gate.

Bruce's attitude was perfect. He learnt that his mother and he were to part the next day; he felt the tension of the situation in his sensitive heart, and attributed to it his mother's evident disturbance of spirit, and her manifest desire to keep him close by her until he went to bed.

It was but a momentary impulse, her acceptance of John Pengelley's show of affectionate sympathy; the exact counterpart in the region of natural emotion to that in the domain of moral emotion which she had just previously traversed. The one, discounting the other, doubtless left the balance of good and evil precisely where it was in this mobile nature.

“Why am I made to be so good and then so bad?” Victoria Goldenour inwardly pleaded in self-defence. “It is certain I cannot be one without the other.”

CHAPTER V

WAKING DREAMS

ON the platform next morning Victoria met John Pengelley waiting to escort her up to town. She had not expected him, and was not pleased to see him. This sort of thing would not do at all. She had nothing to say to him, and her thoughts were full of the parting with her boy; one hair of whose dear head was worth more to her than all her vacillating regard for this or for any other man. In her mobile nature the emotional pendulum was always oscillating, and to-day she was in the crisis of a revolt against Mr. Pengelley and his attentions. She refused to enter the first-class compartment which he selected for their sole accommodation, and she hurried into a third-class, already more than half-full of miscellaneous people.

“I always travel third-class,” she said defiantly.

Nevertheless he persisted and placed himself uncomfortably opposite to her, wedged in by a multitude of impedimenta. He offered her a box of “Fondants” and a basket of fruit, and placed a lovely bouquet of flowers in her lap. She declined to taste the one or smell the other. The good people in the compartment took him for a young husband who had had a bad time of it, and who was trying to propitiate an offended wife. In short, she made herself so persistently unfriendly that at Hitchin Mr. Pengelley gave up the attempt to please her, and migrated into a first-class smoking-carriage.

Then Mrs. Goldenour’s manners underwent a sudden change. She became delightful to all the worthy women who were her companions. She divided Mr. Pengelley’s grapes and peaches among them, she made their children sick with sweetmeats, and at the London terminus she quite forgot the flowers. She also endeavored to forget or evade their donor: and she pretty nearly

succeeded. At any rate, she manœuvred so well that John Pengelley failed to catch the address she gave the cabman, and was forced to content himself with seeing her disappear, leaving him planted upon the encumbered pavement.

John Pengelley, however, took life too easily to be seriously disconcerted by a check of this nature. He could bide his time. He regarded it all as fair play, well within the recognized rules of the game, which might otherwise lack some stimulating attractiveness. There were always things to be done in town. He knew where to dine well. It would not be a wasted day. He would let Mrs. Goldenour alone for a while and would return home the next morning. She had not given up her lodgings in Cambridge, as he knew, and he imagined her safe to turn up there again. Pengelley was a man who was never in a hurry about anything, and who never lost heart or flesh.

Dr. Garfoyle, on the contrary, was a very preoccupied man : he held many important offices, was much esteemed for public worth, and much consulted in affairs of intricate and far-reaching significance, both in church and society. There was something almost absurd in the way in which his interest and aid had been so coolly invoked on behalf of a passing stranger and her child : first by Mrs. Bratton-Fleming, and afterward by Mrs. Goldenour herself ; but Dr. Garfoyle had for years displayed a practical readiness to respond to the claims of the law of service, and this had produced the inevitable result that people who themselves had nothing to do misinterpreted his motives. They were even ready to imagine him an amiable busy-body but one degree removed from a gossip. They supposed he “liked helping people”—probably from the variety which it lent his days, or possibly from the exercise of power or patronage which it conferred.

By the standard of his own capacity, or the measure of his own worth, each person explains another's conduct. Hence Mrs. Bratton-Fleming's translation of Dr. Garfoyle's character and her easy demands upon his time and thoughts. No doubt there were Jews in the old days in Palestine who confided to each other, as they left the synagogue, or trod the outer courts of the Temple, that the Prophet of Nazareth “liked busying himself with sick people,” and “gaining notoriety by his cures real or professed,” that “as

he no longer worked as a carpenter he had nothing else to do," and that "it afforded him the interest of a new sensation to attempt to raise the dead."

But prejudiced as she had been at first, Victoria probably judged her new friend with truer simplicity and with deeper wisdom by the time that her boy came to the vicarage. She had instinctively realized that Bruce was received there not merely because it pleased Dr. Garfoyle to have children about him, but because deep in his faithful heart, in welcoming the child who had such a tragic history written in the lines of his countenance, he obeyed as a lofty privilege the call to place his powerful judgment and deep wisdom at the service of a little one in need.

Men and women felt when with Dr. Garfoyle that he was always ready, both sympathetically and practically, to take his part in lifting the common burden of human woe, and they brought him their loads accordingly. But as gratitude is a gift of the gods, the characteristic of rare and noble natures, a thing of almost super-human attainment, when they had heaped their packages of misery upon his willing shoulders, they were apt to turn away and say "he likes using his strength ; he is happier so employed" ; or "he has no loads of his own to carry, a middle-aged bachelor like that ; no wife to bother him, no children to make him anxious ; we are really quite generously kind in permitting him to share the responsibilities and cares which are ours." Thus they shifted the weight of obligation and relieved themselves also from the task of simulating an emotion which they were unable to feel.

Dr. Garfoyle had no misshapen idiot sons of his own, so Budge's mother considered that he might as well wash and feed hers ; and the motive which led him to take Bruce Goldenour into his own house did not differ from that which inspired him when he placed fresh straw in the attic for the comfort of the wretched Budge.

After four days' stay at the vicarage, during which time Bruce was duly reported to his absent mother as "being perfectly well and happy," a change came over the boy. Dr. Garfoyle had him immediately removed to a bed in his own room, that he might watch him personally by night. All the ordinary symptoms of fever and of extreme nervous excitability were present, and it was evident to Dr. Garfoyle's practised eye that the child was sickening for some

malady. Shadrach was in a robust condition ; no serving maiden had failed to appear. Budge, the loathed and the unwanted, was in the normal state of any healthy animal, but had not as yet been removed to the asylum, owing to some red-tapeism in the matter of the signatures to the certificates required—only this one child, whom Dr. Garfoyle had scarcely spared from his own sight, whose every movement had been regulated by his personal care since he came beneath his roof, lay with heavy eyes and parched lips, through which the incoherent words began to flow.

Expert as he was Dr. Garfoyle preferred himself to watch by the child's bedside, noting every symptom for the benefit of the professional colleague whom he had summoned. He had also written to the child's mother. From twelve to four o'clock in the morning the fever rose, and the boy, flinging himself from side to side in the bed, was only restrained by the strong protecting hands which controlled his movements. Now first Dr. Garfoyle fully realized in all its tragic extent what havoc had been made of the quivering nerves and delicate sensibilities of the child by the tragedy which he had so early witnessed. In his delirious agony he began to shout out all the long imagined details of the ghastly scene at which he had assisted. Before his terrified but blinded eyes the whole misery was re-enacted.

For hours Dr. Garfoyle held the unhappy boy firmly in his calm, strong hands, using with intent all his powers of soothing and control, with an unchanging attitude of will, which was at once an invocation and a command. And presently a lull came in the wild distress of cerebral excitement ; a change passed over the boy's face, he looked at Dr. Garfoyle with seeing, questioning eyes, and sank back upon his pillow, exhausted, but past the nervous crisis.

Then Dr. Garfoyle summoned Mrs. Pye, whom he had hitherto refrained from calling, for the whole scene was so terrible that the presence of any other human being would have increased the strain upon his own nerves.

The morning brought the proof that Bruce was suffering from an attack of scarlatina. Mrs. Goldenour was telegraphed for ; but by midday she had not appeared.

Downstairs in the dining-room, at the hungry hour of one, the

two curates and the other young fellows, whom Mr. John Pengelley so unhandsomely called "cads," were sitting together over their pudding. Shadrach was waiting upon them; he had had scarlet fever long ago, and it had agreed with him very nicely. Suddenly the door opened, and the haggard figure of a man precipitated itself into their midst.

It was William Birmingham, the ex-verger. He was fully dressed and carried a bag and wraps as though for a journey; yet he had not left his room for months before. He coughed horribly and held on to the back of one of the young men's chairs for support, groaning, strangling, unable to articulate. The senior curate rose and placed him in a seat.

"How now, Birmingham?" he said kindly. "Is it not very rash of you to leave your bed and expose yourself to all the risks of cold in this way?"

"And am I not exposed already to worse risks than those of cold?" screamed the angry man with the whistling falsetto of the phthisical patient. "What arrangements, I desire to know, have been made for my safety in the present crisis? Have suitable lodgings been secured for my accommodation? Of course the risks of infection are nothing to Dr. Garfoyle—he is a professional man; and as for all you young fellows, why, of course, as you are all going to become clergymen, you must take your chance; but for me, in my delicate state of health, to be left to make provision for my own safety is an outrage, an outrage, I say! an offence against common charity!"

One of the young men choked down a laugh; this maddened the indignant verger, and a fresh fit of coughing threatened to strangle him. Mrs. Trupper and Shadrach stood looking on, Shadrach fully appreciating Mr. Birmingham's exaggerated sense of his own importance.

"I am going," Birmingham continued, as soon as he could speak, "I am going to Dr. Garfoyle's official residence, to the canon's house in the close, since no provision has been made for me here. I shall go into residence, I say!" Here the students, unable to control themselves, burst into suppressed laughter and rushed from the room.

"I have put up my things—my surplices, my two cassocks, and

my sanctuary slippers. There may be a vacancy in the cathedral staff and I am prepared to fill it ; but I must have my quarter's salary ; I have my railway fare and other expenses to consider. And mind," he continued, "I have never been dismissed, only superseded ; I have not resigned my office here, and I shall bring an action in a court of law if my claim is disputed."

In vain did the senior curate remind the man that he had been housed, fed, and nursed when homeless and no longer able to hold his post as verger ; this was not Birmingham's view of the matter. From the very fact that he had been entirely supported since he broke down, he argued his right to be so supported. It stood to reason that since he had been fed and nursed, to food and nursing he had a right ; and if there was any flaw in this argument it lay beyond the range of his logic. That his benefactor's conduct toward him might be the measure of Dr. Garfoyle's generosity and not of his, Birmingham's, deserts, was not a thing likely to enter into the verger's calculations. So the curate argued in vain, and the matter had to be referred to the vicar ; who, in pity to a moribund man, directed that he should be permitted to do as he wished. So Shadrach called a cab and brought in a telegram from Sir Victor Bruce at the same time :

"Mrs. Goldenour gone into the country. Address uncertain. Will return to-morrow without fail."

So for a second night did Dr. Garfoyle sit by the sick child's bed, who in all his intervals of consciousness now began to ask incessantly for his mother. Mrs. Pye's presence agitated him ; she fussed about, remembered her own importance, related her previous experiences, and betrayed the depressing view which she took of the situation.

In the course of the night the terrible cries began again—again the child assisted at his father's death.

"Let me go !" he cried, as the ghastly tragedy was perpetrated before his wild, beautiful eyes, and he tried to escape, to fling himself out of the bed, "let me go ! At least let me hide behind that screen, do not let me see it any more ! Oh, let me die too. Father, father, take me in your arms and let me go with you !"

Dr. Garfoyle soothed the child again by the exercise of gentle, steady pressure, and by the moral force of his tranquil, yet authoritative nature. He ceased crying out as suddenly as he had begun, sobbed for breath, and gazed mournfully at Dr. Garfoyle; but his mind, diverted by a power superior to his own, was still astray.

"All mother's pretty things are spoiled," he said in a feeble voice.

Now, if all this had been a mere baseless delirium, Dr. Garfoyle would at once have administered a soothing potion, and would have trusted to the child's sleeping away the painful fancies of a disordered imagination; but as the condition was one in which the veritable impressions of the child's deepest self rose to the surface, it was evident that, with any cerebral excitement, this nervous agitation would recur perpetually. Some fresh association of ideas must be established in his mind. Some new picture must be impressed upon his imagination before the old and frightful one could be effaced. The reagents which brought up the one set of impressions must actually henceforth serve to develop the other. Therefore Dr. Garfoyle, laying one hand upon the boy's burning head, and taking his little hands in the other, spoke to him in earnest, penetrating tones:

"Listen, Bruce, quite quietly, while I talk to you. Do not move, but lie still and listen. Your father is quite well now. You have made a mistake. He is all healed and cured. He is no longer cut to pieces or bleeding any more. It is years ago now since Jesus Christ healed him and cured him, restored him and made him quite well again; and now he looks beautiful, and strong, and happy in his spiritual body; and he would have me tell you this. He is so sorry that his little boy saw him so terribly hurt on earth; but do you know he has made me understand that it hurt you a great deal the most to see him hurt? I know that he does not remember anything about it now. He fell down, and then he forgets it all. It did not hurt him, Bruce, half as much as it hurt you when you fell down those kitchen stairs."

"Didn't it?" said the boy softly; "oh, I am so glad! I thought it hurt him so, because it has hurt me here ever since," and he placed his little hand upon his heart and gasped for breath.

"When anyone we love is dead," said Dr. Garfoyle, speaking

very slowly, so that each word might reach the apprehension of the child with the power of conviction—"when anyone is dead their pain has ceased, but not ours; it stays with us because we loved them so. Over and over again, for days and weeks and years, we feel in our hearts and bodies, as you say, all that we think they suffered, and so we mix ourselves up with them, and think they feel as we do; but that is a mistake, you know. All the while they are away in their whole happy bodies, Bruce; and often, I think, they are even trying to make us feel their joy."

"Do you know? Does father tell you? Who tells you?"

"Yes," Dr. Garfoyle said, "I know. When Jesus died He said His pain was 'finished,' and when your father died his pain was finished. Listen, Bruce; never again are you to see that dreadful thing: Christ will not have you see it, and your father will not have it. Next time it comes to you, you are to remember that it is all over long ago, and you are to see your father, if at all, in his new whole body; beautiful and shining and joyous and young. You are to believe that he speaks to you through me."

The boy listened with a long, rapt gaze fixed upon the inspired countenance which bent over him. Softly his eyes closed, and his breathing grew gentler and more regular, until, in the vision which the speaker's words called up, he passed into a peaceful sleep and awoke refreshed.

Victoria Goldenour appeared the next day, but not until Dr. Garfoyle had sent to meet train after train, and Bruce was seriously fretting for his mother. She advanced into the hall to meet Dr. Garfoyle with averted face, and the flush upon her pure white cheek was evidently due to the crimsoning of anger and not to the emotion of gratitude.

"He is really better," said Dr. Garfoyle, hastening to meet her with extended hand, which she refused to see—"better, but he cannot of course be said to be out of danger yet. The malady must run its course; and in his case there is so much cerebral and nervous excitement to contend with that the chief risk lies there."

"You need not tell me that!" she said bitterly. "Say at least that you have called in the best physician that you know, and that you have not been doctoring him yourself from your memories of medicine in your youth; then let me go upstairs at once. I have

come prepared to nurse him." And she indicated by a little characteristic gesture that her dress was of a white washing material.

"My memories of medicine in my youth," responded Dr. Garfoyle, with one of his all-pardoning smiles, "have constituted me your boy's nurse. The use of having studied medicine, Mrs. Goldenour, is that one dares to nurse ; and I have nursed your boy night and day, as though he were my own. I have summoned the best physician of my acquaintance, and I have carefully observed his directions, I assure you."

But she was still unsoftened in the angry misery which her wise friend saw and pitied. If she would keep back the starting tears, her anger must find vent in bitter reproaches ; unreasonable woman as she was !

"This," she exclaimed, as she ascended the stairs, "this is what has come of my allowing Bruce to come into this low neighborhood ; no doubt he has caught the infection from some of these squalid cottages which surround you."

"The little fellow has taken no harm here," said Dr. Garfoyle with perfect courtesy. "It may deliver you from all self-reproach upon that score to learn that, in the interests of sanitary science, the physician that I called in has hunted down the source of the infection ; he has traced it to the landlady's children in your lodgings. She was indeed greatly to blame in the matter."

His dignified yet kindly courtesy told upon her irritability ; she turned and faced him on the landing, the tears shining in her pleading eyes.

"Forgive me," she said ; "it is I who am to blame for bringing all this trouble upon you. I know I am very selfish in my misery. Somehow I cannot stop to remember that I have no claim."

"Some day," he said, smiling, "perhaps I may succeed in making you remember that the need constitutes the claim. But now, here we are at the door of the room—tell me, before we go in, what sort of a nurse are you ?"

"A mother, who would give her life for her child as she would have done to save his father," she replied, placing her trembling hands in his.

"I see," he answered ; "one whose nerves are overstrung and——"

“And who was dancing all last night,” she interposed, speaking bitterly. “I had gone to some friends in the country for a ball, and I hadn’t left a proper address. When I got back they showed me your telegrams, and my grandfather gave me a check, which he had refused me before. He was really sorry about the child’s illness.”

“And you have had no sleep,” Dr. Garfoyle continued, “and you have been sick with mortal fear ; too ill with dread to be able to eat or drink. Not only are you one who has in imagination gone before to meet the worst, but you carry with you everywhere the memory of having upon the threshold of your life met death in an appalling form ; and in this state of mind and memory you think yourself prepared to nurse a child so observant and sympathetic that he adopts all your thoughts, learns all your fears by heart, sees all your spectres, and feels all your griefs ; a child who is so much a part of your very being that you cannot, if you would, keep anything in the dim recesses of your thought hidden from him.”

“Yes, it is all true,” she said impatiently ; “but there is no remedy. Let me go to Bruce. Where have you got him ? Ah ! in your own room.”

“There was no other,” he answered plainly. “But I will not let you go in, in your present state. Bruce is asleep just now, and your nurse is with him. You must eat, drink, if possible sleep, and certainly wear a different aspect before he sees you. Look at him from here, through the open door. So. Trupper will show you a vacant room next to the old paralytic’s. It was Birmingham’s. I wish it were a better one ; but there is no other.”

Victoria glanced at Dr. Garfoyle’s kindly but resolute face for a moment, as though to measure her powers of rebellion against his will ; then obeyed him simply, like a tired child. But when night fell Dr. Garfoyle went in and found her crouching on the floor by her child’s bedside. Bruce was beginning to rehearse the dismal scene which haunted his memory, but with less intensity, as though some second thought, or after-impression, followed to cast doubts upon its reality. His mother was biting the bed-clothes in her agony, and she had stopped her ears to prevent any sound of distress escaping her which might add to the boy’s excitement.

Dr. Garfoyle raised her up, soothed her by his wonderful power, and sent her away, explaining to her that it was absolutely necessary that he alone should watch by Bruce's bedside, to continue, as he had begun, the control of the boy's nervous condition. This was the third night on which he had kept his watch, and even on his calm temperament fatigue was beginning to tell ; and when in the early morning the excitement, which was sensibly diminished, was over, and the boy as usual fell asleep utterly exhausted, Dr. Garfoyle also succumbed. He was sitting upon the floor in an uncomfortable position, leaning partly against the child's bed, partly against the seat of a large armchair which stood beside it. He had adopted this posture in order to be the better able to reach Bruce, and to control him as he lay.

At six o'clock Victoria entered softly, and thus she found them both. She had slept well, as he had desired ; she had eaten, and had dressed herself with care. She came creeping noiselessly in so as not to disturb the child, and she saw them both asleep as they were. Gently she slid into the capacious chair, and withdrawing a cushion from its depths, she placed it on her knees, and supported her benefactor's head upon it.

At the change of position Dr. Garfoyle gave a quiet sigh of relief, but slept on as peacefully as the worn-out child upon the bed, with his fine head thrown back and pillowed tenderly upon the cushion on her lap. But he dreamed, and the dream was of long ago, when gentle hands had rested on his hair, and tender kisses fell upon his brow. Moved by a simple impulse of gratitude and innocent tenderness Victoria passed her hand over his still abundant hair, and let her fingers rest for an instant upon his sleeping eyes and broad, smooth brow.

He stirred and smiled, but did not wake, and she withdrew her hand and sat motionless. Still the dream persisted ; and, as consciousness grew, he sighed at the immortality of the old sorrow which still quivered with life after the strenuous suppression of twenty years. He moved and waked, to find himself supported by Victoria's aid.

"You were quite tired out," she said ; "you have sat up three nights for me. You must not be angry that I made myself a pillow for your wearied head."

“My weight must have been a burden too heavy for your slender strength,” he said apologetically, as he hastened to rise.

“It was a burden of which I am indeed not worthy,” she replied. “Pray, go and rest. I am calm enough now to nurse my boy.”

In sleep the old love of years ago had dominated him. Scenes remote from his present surroundings had encompassed him ; emotions, aspirations, crushed by the weight of years, throbbed with life anew. In the dreamland to which he had passed, beneath the influence of Victoria’s caressing touch, he had tasted a renewal of life’s prime ; he had seen the morning glory of the world with the sanguine eyes of youth ; he had known in his unaging heart the passionate joy of love’s embrace. But as he awoke the beauty of the dream faded. His exalted individuality painfully contracted within the limits of his present state. He was again merely the Vicar of St. Amwell’s, the Canon of St. Ives, the Burnett Professor of Patristic Divinity, not the young man rejoicing as a bridegroom, exultant in the coming of the enchanted princess.

His countenance was luminous with this divine renewal when he first awoke ; but as the consciousness of surrounding conditions returned to him he was troubled by the difficulty of readjusting his words and actions, and he altogether failed to connect Victoria Goldenour’s presence with the suggestions of his dreams. She, seeing his face grow stern and cold, imagined that she had betrayed her affectionate gratitude to his displeasure.

“You are angry now,” she said. “I have offended you ; but think what you have done for me. How shall I ever repay you ? I have done that which has hurt your highly sensitive nature.”

“You ! What have you done ?” he said. “Nothing to apologize for, I am sure. I do not understand your speech ; but come into the next room, lest we disturb the child. I slept by your boy’s bedside ; I was, I own, exhausted. Perhaps I am still but half-awake. In imagination I confess I had entered into an Eden from which I was exiled in days long gone by. Now and then in dreams I cross its threshold still, and then the vivid pictures of the past are apt somewhat to blur my vision when I awake. I crave your pardon for my faults of manner. The magic of my youth had seized me and possessed me. The experience was overpowering while it

lasted, and I awoke dazed and confused ; but the tide has turned now, the past is swiftly receding. My spirit was, I believe, momentarily overwhelmed."

"And were your memories welcome to you?" she asked.

"Our record of mental possessions would be a very poor one," he answered evasively, "without some indestructible memories of our youth ; but I must not linger here, your boy is doing well, and I must go to Budge ; I fear that we have conveyed the infection to him."

"Why can't his mother come and nurse the poor creature?"

"His mother has ten children, one an infant," he replied. "And all living at home in two cottage rooms ten feet by twelve."

"Why cannot the district nurse see to him? They tell me she lives here."

"The vicarage must not infect the parish," he replied shortly; "she has left the house. I assure you, if I could have made other arrangements for the poor thing, I would most thankfully have done so. They have, indeed, promised me to make special arrangements for his reception in the fever ward of the hospital, if possible ; but I doubt their power to do it."

"And all this trouble and expense I have brought upon you. At least you will let me pay my share," she said, tendering Sir Victor Bruce's check.

He took it, smoothed it out, and returned it to her.

"Happily," he said, "I am not a poor man. I have more than sufficient for all that a reasonable man can desire."

"But if Budge dies you will let me pay for the funeral. It will be a good thing if he does die, won't it?" Victoria asked in a clear, crisp voice. "I have not seen him ; but they tell me he is dreadful."

The tone and nature of the speech hurt Dr. Garfoyle's sensitive soul. He turned away and left her without a word ; and mounting the attic stairs for his revolting task, he repelled the impression of her words as though some evil thing had struck him. The deeper the depth of human misery, the greater the power demanded to meet it ; perhaps within the precincts of that ancient town there was no one else that day found worthy to serve and wait on Budge.

"This is truly an extraordinary house," Mrs. Goldenour said to

herself, as she watched her friend's retreating form ascend the stairs ; and when he had disappeared, returned to her lonely watch by her child's bedside. "When I do try to help them they all misunderstand me. The old woman upstairs took me for a scented angel ; the master of the house mistakes my grateful care for the touch of a vanished hand : to her I was a spirit ; to him I am the ghost of some 'dear dead woman,' and nothing more."

"With Mr. Pengelley's compliments and kind enquiries," said Shadrach, putting his ruddy face in at the door, and holding in his red hand a magnificent bunch of choice flowers. A note accompanied the gift and a basket of fruit followed.

"To this one at least I am neither a ghost nor an angel, but a woman in flesh and blood," Victoria said to herself as she glanced from the written words to the picture of her own rare beauty in the glass.

John Pengelley's temperament might be inartistic, even somewhat coarse, but his warm recognition of the enticing qualities of her personal loveliness soothed the wounded vanity stung by the want of comprehension displayed by Dr. Garfoyle. Moved by an almost childlike impulse, she had bent over him and had caressed his hair ; and he had had no thought but for a dead past ; and even while her eyes still shone upon his face, he had forsaken her for the unclean and repulsive animal in human shape whom he tended upstairs.

CHAPTER VI

WHICH SHALL IT BE?

A DAY of November gloom and fog settling down deeper and deeper over the dreary locality ; the unattractive vicarage enveloped in a yellow, murky atmosphere, and within its walls the shadow of death gathering closer and closer.

Absolute silence reigned now in that house so lately the centre of life and activity. The two sisters Pye and Trupper worked below, in a tired, taciturn way, no longer relieving the tedium of their common thoughts by criticisms upon those they served. The

boy Shadrach, stolidly unmoved, passed up and down the stairs on errands from the kitchen to the rooms above. Only the soul of the paralyzed woman dwelt in a paradise of certainty, melted away in an ecstasy of faith, for she held that to the remnant of her withered senses the Lord had revealed Himself with spices of Edom and touches divine.

Below, in the best chamber of the house, the lovely boy who had won his way so quickly into Dr. Garfoyle's heart lay conscious, but scarcely breathing, exhausted to the very verge of extinguished life. The pallor upon his beautiful brow, now that he seemed already far beyond the following of mere human experience, did but add to it a crown of more than childish dignity. In the purity of absolute innocence, his mien was almost inspiring. Yet it seemed as though the pity of things that he might never know, and the loss of those which he might never learn, burned deeply in his mournful eyes; the fleeting spirit gazed from out them with so yearning an intensity of tender questioning upon the tragic mystery of maternal passion and of pain which was being unrolled before his fading sight. It was at once as though he knew all things, yet knew nothing; all that the spirit might teach him, nothing that he might have learnt from the lips of one that loved him; as though, while conversant with all that the ages might have handed down to him, he was unversed in anything that the little world around him might have shown him. Everything that the purest and most lofty intelligence could instinctively grasp was his, nothing that the vulgar diurnal experience of such a child as Shadrach might have suggested. The child's beauty was the consecration of the place wherein he lay, and when Dr. Garfoyle, entering at the door, literally removed his shoes, he did so ostensibly lest he should disturb the sufferer; in reality because his glowing heart was penetrated by the conviction that the place was indeed a shrine from which a lovely soul was preparing to wing its flight into the higher sphere of its perfection.

Toward nightfall the mother's anguish was dominated by despair. All day she had moved about the room silent and intent upon each little act of service, but ever with dumb agony gnawing at her heart-strings. Her sharpened senses had noted every external detail of the dull November day; her ears had been hurt by the

tinkling bell from the church just across the paved way, calling misguided men and women—so she felt—to pray to an inhuman or non-existent deity who would not grant her child a single day of his sweet young life. In her misery Victoria had seen and had resented the punctuality with which Dr. Garfoyle had attended at his numerous services. She had noted and had been exasperated by the gathered serenity which shone upon his countenance when he re-entered the room. She had felt annoyed at his leaving the house, after making a careful toilet, for his lecture at eleven o'clock.

In spite of the knowledge which she possessed of the grave disorganization of his days caused by the mixing of her life with his ; in spite of the eloquent fact that he was more than nurse or doctor to her child ; although the world outside had multitudinous claims upon him, yet she bitterly resented his ever leaving Bruce's bedside ; and most of all did she resent the care which he bestowed upon Budge up above in the garret ; a care, as she well knew, rendered imperative by the failure of his attempts to procure the idiot's removal to any hospital or asylum whatever.

Every other dying or suffering creature was, it seemed, too good to suffer or to die in the company of this human disgrace, of this travesty of humanity. None might be insulted or disgusted, in the hour of his extremity, by this awful presentation of what extreme forms of vice and animalism could contrive to show. The lowest of all demanded that at least in their hour of mortal anguish, such intimations of immortality as might touch their trembling spirits should be uncontradicted by the witness of this epitome of human degradation. So Dr. Garfoyle alone remained pure enough in spirit, strong enough in nerve, calm enough in faith and charity to touch this loathsome lump of flesh and blood, which lay sodden in a stupor from which no intelligence of any outward thing from birth to death might ever draw it. And it had been from this service that he had passed to the pure atmosphere of the quiet room below, where, with bent head in reverent attitude, he had knelt, hushed in the presence of a being whose face already shone with the radiance of the victorious spirit, whose quickened intelligence still enlightened the earth, while already the glory of the invisible world seemed breaking upon its inner vision. Could it be possi-

ble?—it was not even thinkable—that hand in hand, Bruce and Budge were to take the same last journey together, toward the same goal?

In Victoria Goldenour's tortured mind the terror grew.

"Do not leave me," she cried, clinging to the compassionate man. "You must stay with me this last night. You must! You cannot be so cruel as to forsake me now."

"The end has not come yet, and your child may not die," Dr. Garfoyle answered resolutely.

"All my hope lies in you. In Him you call 'God,' if indeed He exists at all, I have no hope whatever. You, you are God to me," she cried, following him into the next room, whither he had led the way, fearful lest her agonized words should reach and rend her child's heart.

There she stood before him, more lovely in the abandonment of her grief than ever in the pride of her bright days.

Dr. Garfoyle bent over her, his whole true heart going out to her with pangs of sympathy, which vibrated his strong frame.

"My child, my child," he said, laying a compelling hand upon her shoulder as he placed her in a chair, "my whole soul suffers in your sorrow, my heart breaks for your grief. I will return. I will look in every hour of the night. I carry you with me when I leave you. Listen, I do not imagine it to be the divine will that your poor boy should die."

She gasped, and looked up awe-stricken in his face.

"I have a strong inner conviction, a knowledge indeed I might say, for which I can give you no pathological reason; indeed, speaking as a student of empirical science, there is small hope for the boy; but," he said—lifting up his head with a joyous movement of certainty, as though he stood alone and undismayed beneath an unclouded heaven—"but the boy will live! That is my faith. Can you not make it yours? Oh, receive it from me, I entreat you; for in the conviction lies your power to guard the struggling life, to fan the flickering spark into a flame."

Victoria took both his hands in hers, bent her head over them, and pressing her lips upon them covered them with tears and kisses, and cried:

"I have no strength, no power, no outlook beyond the narrow

room and the failing breath ; I have nothing but despair—or hope in you. Save him, sir ! You love him too, I see you do.”

“I love him,” said Dr. Garfoyle, “as I never should have thought it possible to love any child unrelated to me. All that love can do, I do, and have done, for you both.”

“Then,” she said, rising up, “hear me ; if you will save him, I will give him to you. He shall be yours. And if you will not have me too, I—his mother—will go quite away, and never trouble you again. My grateful words hurt you, I can see they do. You have put the love of women beneath your feet. You have made your nature solitary to its depths ; but when I laid my hands upon your head, as it rested on the cushion on my knees, it was I who summoned up your past ; and I doubt if you can banish it again.” Even in that instant of supremely genuine emotion she glanced at her own lovely image reflected back to her by the mirror at her side. “If I were to you what I am to others ; if you saw me as I truly am ; if my love and devotion were worth anything to you, how gladly would I bring all that I am or have to serve and bless you ; but if I am indeed an intrusion in your life, if all that I am or have besides is of no value for you, then take my child alone. You are no longer young, you have none near you to delight in ; the day may well come that the boy may prove the rarest blessing life can hold for you. But am I indeed so poor and worthless in your eyes ? Have I indeed no value for you ? Men have told me other things than that. Must I indeed not say to you, ‘Save my child, and take me too’ ?”

Again she sank down upon her chair and wept with emotion.

Dr. Garfoyle passed round to the back of her chair and leant over it, while his strong frame shook with governed agitation. In that instant he knew that the discipline of years, the armor in which he had clad his nature, was shivered at the breath of this fair woman’s words.

“Nothing to him !” Why, his whole soul was dissolved, his very nature melted that he might take her in. Yet he groaned in spirit ; not without strenuous bitter effort might the cruel self-suppression of five-and-twenty years end in this. Then was all his life wasted ? What of all the tears and prayers, what of the silent agonies and lonely watchings of the night, known only to his Maker and him-

self, since as a young man he had resisted the temptation to end in self-destruction the days which had seemed so worthless for love's sake ?

The shock was a mighty birth-pang of agony and joy. Yet the habit of self-control was still omnipotent. Not for an instant did he waver in his resolution. He leaned over her chair and said, in a voice which trembled indeed, but which in her ears sounded singularly cold and guarded :

"You are unnerved to-night, my friend. You do not know what you say, or you are unable to calculate the effect of your words. I will take care of you and of your boy as though I were indeed his father. Do not trouble your gentle heart with these useless attempts at expressing gratitude. We are too near to each other to need words. If you would please me, obey me ; go downstairs and get some food, and try and rest for half an hour. Leave me here and send the nurse away ; I would be alone for half an hour with our boy. More than that time I cannot give at once, but I will return."

"And why not more than half an hour ? Do you count half-hours now ?" she cried, springing up, her white face burning suddenly, indignation and misery flaming in her shining eyes. Had she not laid herself at his feet, the prize of all her youth and beauty as the purchase of her boy's life, and now he valued her at precisely "half an hour" of his time.

"'Half an hour' when my child dies ; when you alone can save him ! How, I know not, but I know you can ; by your faith or by your skill, I know not which ; and with all life to live after, you give me 'half an hour.' Oh, you and your God are cruel, wicked ; I renounce you both ; cruel, cold, hard, deaf, pitiless ! One abases one's self, one crawls and prays to you both, one even becomes good ; one promises, one would perform, and one meets with silence, immobility, indifference ; untouched, unmoved, you offer 'half an hour,' a 'hope,' and thirty minutes !" And in a frenzy of furious weeping she flung herself face downward upon the couch, and rocked herself backward and forward, sobbing in agony.

Then Dr. Garfoyle, laying a hand upon her head with tender pressure, in a persuasive voice which compelled attention said :

"Listen, Victoria"—he had never called her by her name before,

and with the alert attention of the hysterical nature she noticed it at once. "Listen, Victoria, and be calm. That poor parody of humanity up above is nearing his death hour, and he must not be left. He shall not die alone. Your boy is surrounded with affection, he has his mother to support him, his nurse is with him. If any change or necessity occurs, send for me and I will come. I shall be at hand all night; but not even for your sake, not even for your boy's, shall that poor wreck of human nature meet the last moments of his miserable life uncared for and untended. If there were anyone else to nurse him then it might be otherwise; but you are well aware that neither of the women in this house will approach him, that not his own mother, nor any other human being whom I have been able to secure, will go near the place where he lies."

She had ceased weeping, and for a few seconds remained absolutely silent and still; then she stood before him erect, calm and determined, and lovely as a dream. "And now hear me," she said. "I will nurse Budge for you, if you will remain with Bruce. I will go upstairs at once, and I will do everything that is required. If needs be, I will take his awful head in my arms. I will nurse him as tenderly as though I cared for his life, if you will only spend this night by my child. You need not fear. I shall not shrink nor fail, and if he dies he shall die upon my bosom: I promise it to you."

He looked at her with ardent admiration, restraining with effort the deep sense of enfolding love which possessed him, as she faced him in her proud beauty, quick to the very finger-tips with maternal love and agony.

"Yes," he said deliberately, "you shall go and tend Budge. It will be better so. The distasteful task will cost you some qualms of physical loathing, which you may easily surmount, but nothing more. There will be no reaction of nerve, no sympathetic torture in nursing him. Budge suffers as an animal suffers, his pains are inarticulate, never extending to outward consciousness; and the age-old problems of humanity which are suggested by him will not perplex you in your present state."

"On condition," she said, "that you save my boy, which you alone can do."

"I alone?" he questioned reprovingly.

"Yes, you alone. What faith have I in your God? Did He not let my beautiful young husband pour out his life-blood at my feet? Would He not have let my child die but for you? But *you* I do believe in. See, whatever I may be in your eyes, however valueless, at least you must confess that I am good enough to nurse Budge; Budge is only a body, but Bruce possesses a soul; for the questionings of the pure spirit, even of my own child, I may possess no answers; for his inspired soul no language; for the eloquent appeal of his sweet eyes I may find no reply; but for the brute pains of Budge's mortal body my care may suffice. That is how you feel about me; yes, I know it well. I am not a stupid woman. I can read men's thoughts. Now let me go. For Bruce's life there is no price too great for me to pay. But if my darling dies, your faith will show him the heaven that his sweet spirit seeks; your hand will lead him to the golden gate whereat he pictures that his father waits to lead him across the crystal pavement which his childish imagination thinks to tread. Your courage will support him if he shrinks or fears. The visions of your spirit will give form to his. Go; for *you* God will exist still, even if Bruce dies; for me He is dead already."

"My child, do not say any more now," Dr. Garfoyle answered gravely; "it shall be as you have chosen; I will call you if I need you, you will come for me if I can help you. At present we have to work and not to talk."

She gazed at him as though she would read the secrets of his very soul; then putting up her sweet face like a penitent child to be consoled, she said humbly:

"I am good now, please kiss me."

But resisting the impulse to gather her to his heart, he blessed her only, as a father might have done, and she passed up the stairs, dumbly crying as she went to the Power she had protested that she disbelieved in:

"If I do this for Thee, do Thou have mercy upon me. By the care that I have of this one, save my child."

She saw by the dim light that burned in a stand that the creature on a mattress on the floor yet breathed; she crouched down by its side and looked at it. She had never seen it closely before; only

once or twice, when she had been upon the landing to call Dr. Garfoyle down for her own services, she had caught a glimpse of something horrible, that lay inert and groaned beneath coarse coverings. And now she was all alone with it, and it was going to die.

Immersed in physical collapse Budge, the human brute, lay. The marvellous spectacle of an ever varying external world had never penetrated his intelligence. From the moment of his birth in a squalid hovel to that of his death upon a garret floor no ray, no spark of divine reason had ever pierced the darkness of his soul ; if indeed he had a soul at all.

At first he gave no sign of life beyond inarticulate moans, as of a beast in agony ; but presently, as the hours wore on, he began to throw his distorted arms and twisted hands about : she took the misshapen things in her own tender palms and held them with a sweet constraint. She gave him drink when he was thirsty—nay, he did not even know he was athirst at all, he knew nothing, nor ever would know. Then he began to roll his huge and horrible head ; the eyes opened, and one of them fixed on hers with a blind, blank stare ; the other gazed upon the opposite wall. This was more than she could bear, this ghastly refraction of the thing's vision ; she passed one arm beneath the head and drew it upon her soft bosom, and her tears mingled with the death dew which began to gather on the coarse lined skin.

She pined to go downstairs, to gather tidings of her child ; fancied that Dr. Garfoyle could not come to her because he too was assisting at the final scene, at the last moments of the rare life of her own lovely boy. Once more the irrepressible cry burst from her lips, "Christ, I have done this for Thee ; do Thou that for me, and heal my son."

There was no bell in the attic for her to ring, no one for her to summon to her assistance. Pye and Trupper had, as she knew, positively refused to nurse "a pauper's idiot," a creature whom in their poor vulgar parlance they styled "a mere hog" ; moreover, Pye was angry and displeased at what she chose to speak of as "Dr. Garfoyle's interference" with her work. "But she might at least have come to bring me tidings," poor Victoria sobbed.

So the hours passed, making for her an eternity of misery.

But before even a faint streak of wintry dawn had shone through the skylight above her head the attic door was pushed open a little way, and Shadrach's young face beamed in the doorway, looking as rosy, commonplace, and contented as ever. Victoria tried to speak, but her lips refused to frame a question.

"The vicar's sent me," said the boy, "to say that Master Bruce is doing well and is in a lovely sleep."

That it was well with him and that he slept ; surely this was the old ominous biblical phraseology !

"You are deceiving me, boy ; it is the sleep of death !" she cried, still holding the heavy, restless burden in her wearied arms.

"No," said Shadrach in even, unmoved tones, "he is doing very well. He is asleep. Dr. Garfoyle could not come himself without disturbing him, or he would have come or sent before. He says he sends his love ; and how have you done here ?" the boy added in childish phraseology.

At that instant the shapeless being in her arms was seized with violent convulsions ; his whole frame was shaken and twisted, writhing out of her grasp ; and the death rattle sounded in his throat. Shadrach stood transfixed, his whole honest face growing grave and troubled ; yet keenly, curiously interested in this, as in all other natural phenomena by him unobserved before, with the healthy, inborn instinct of the young, uncultivated male. But he was frightened ; although fascinated, too frightened to run away, even were his curiosity not too strongly engaged.

"Oh, Shadrach, this is dreadful ; can we do nothing ? Can you do nothing ?" Victoria cried, meaning, "Can you not fetch someone ?"

But Shadrach had only one thought in connection with service in that attic.

"Shall I sing ?" he asked, and without waiting for her answer, if indeed she heard what he said, which was doubtful, he resolutely turned his back upon the, to him, awfully attractive spectacle, and lifting up his clear, ringing voice, he sang, with his eyes fixed upon the rafters of the unceilinged room.

He chose a hymn of triumph and of praise—strange "Nunc Dimittis," for Budge—and through the silent house the sweet echoes pealed and rang. But when he had done singing, before even the

sweet melody of his song had died away, he turned and saw that the idiot had fallen back a lifeless, quivering lump, with the lady's arms still beneath his head ; and that her beautiful face lay beside Budge's on the pillow in a deadly swoon.

For once Shadrach had seen enough. He turned and fled, shouting for assistance. And so Dr. Garfoyle found her, three minutes later, when summoned by the boy's cries ; he lifted her up in his strong arms and bore her to the room adjoining that wherein her child lay in a happy sleep ; there he placed her on the bed, breathing over her a benediction as he laid her down.

Victoria opened her eyes and questioned him silently. Dr. Garfoyle saw and understood. "Yes," he said ; "Bruce lives and will do well."

In that moment Victoria Goldenour believed in God. Budge was dead, and Bruce lived. All her prayers had been heard. Bruce, so lovely, so precious, so intelligent ; Bruce, her only son, her joy, her life, the one treasure that she possessed on earth, the one love in which there could be no change, no failure in response. Bruce lived, and Budge had died ; Budge the undesired, Budge the hideous, the repulsive ; Budge, who had been too much of an animal even to wear clothing ; Budge, the human brute, was dead. Dead without even knowing that he had ever lived, or understanding that he was born to die. God reigned in the heavens once more since Bruce was alive on earth, and Bruce's mother adored and worshipped ; believed in His overruling Providence ; gave thanks, and devoted herself body and soul to His service, as represented to her by His messenger, Terence Garfoyle.

In that moment her faith overflowed. The Supreme had judged rightly in that His judgment appeared to accord with her own estimate of the relative values of the two lives. Never again would she doubt, and with rivers of happy tears she besought forgiveness for ever having doubted at all that He was, and that He ruled rightly, when her child looked up at her once more with glad, dilated eyes.

But Budge's mother was actually of a different mind. Even she had a notion as to the due management of the universe, and she felt quite competent to express an opinion concerning the justice of the fiat of life and death.

By the side of the very grave in which, at Dr. Garfoyle's charges, the unfortunate corpse was laid, she also vindicated her maternal portion in what she now called her "dear afflicted son," by roundly abusing Dr. Garfoyle for having brought him within reach of the illness which caused his death. True, she had in life refused the morsel of food or drink requisite to keep him from starvation ; and she had wearied all her neighbors with lamentations over the day which gave him birth ; but now he was her "favorite son," since a "mother always loves the best that which has the greater need." So she wept and scolded, and threatened pains and penalties on the head of him who had supplied her own lack. Thus she eased her conscience of some lurking remnants of self-reproach and vindicated her maternal sentiments at once.

CHAPTER VII

MAN AND MONK

JOHN PENGELLEY was an out-door sort of man. He was accustomed to stroll about the gardens and paddocks, and to stride over the lands at North Hall, with a pipe in his mouth and several dogs at his heels, for most days in the year. They preserved their own game largely, and had many guns down for the season. His next brother was the same sort of man as he was himself ; but in him John had an opportunity of observing his own foibles magnified into faults ; his own weaknesses exaggerated into wickednesses. In Graham, John's honesty became rudeness, his affectionate disposition something unworthy of any good name. John used to say of himself as a boy that he was "always engaged in setting examples to Graham," and of that undesirable brother that he was "useful only as a warning to others." Of those others, one brother was a very young doctor in Manchester, the other a lieutenant on board an ironclad attached to the Mediterranean Squadron.

Their mother, Mrs. Pengelley, was very pleased with herself, in that she was the mother of four fine sons and had never condescended to the feebler production of daughters. Their father had been dead for some years, and as John was the eldest son, Mrs.

Pengelley had begun to think that she should like him to marry ; a daughter-in-law, however undesirable in herself, was valuable as being a necessary adjunct to the possession of grandsons. Mrs. Pengelley was a queer woman, with an insatiable appetite for heirs male worthy of a matron of an Eastern nation, and an entire contempt for the members of her own sex which must have been dictated by an intimate knowledge of herself.

She spent twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four in her own room, where she was engaged in curing herself of imaginary maladies by the application of mild currents of electricity. This exercise represented her notion of "duty"; the rest of her time was spent in the more pleasing avocation of "resting"; with her, an equally sacred employment of time, not by any means to be confined to the seventh, the first, or to any particular day of the week.

Accordingly Mrs. Pengelley was "resting" one morning, when she was unexpectedly disturbed by the entrance of her son John. She had already conceived the idea and the hope that "John had a serious attraction somewhere." Game and grapes, fruit and flowers, had been perpetually going out of the larder ; and John himself had taken a run up to town which had never been quite clearly accounted for. Now she thought she read some important disclosure in his open face, so she unclosed her feeble eyes, turned her pillow, arranged her shawl, and prepared herself to be forgiving about the unusual interruption to her morning's rest. But John only stuck his hands in the pockets of his rough shooting-coat, looked out of the window, and abruptly asked her :

"Mother, have I ever had scarlet fever?"

Now, Mrs. Pengelley had once, and once only, been guilty of a literary effort ; it was when she set up an exercise-book twenty years before, in which to inscribe certain details concerning her sons' healths, heights, and general development. She had left off writing anything in it when they grew up, because since then there had been events in the family which it might not have been quite convenient to record. At present she made answer to her son's enquiry by proposing to read him all the details of the disease as it had affected himself. He declined the offer resolutely.

"But you don't feel you are sickening for it again, do you?" she asked in alarm, scanning his countenance earnestly. "You do look

rather red in the face, now that I come to look at you," she added, "and I understand that it's very much about. Nowadays people are so sensitive they take everything two or three times over. Oh, John, do beware ; just go and draw that blind up that I may see you better, and give me the thermometer; it's in the comb-drawer. I'll get up at once and take your temperature myself; I can finish resting afterward."

"Nonsense, mother; lie still, and tell me, has Graham had it?"

"Beautifully ; he began it ; here it is—page 22. He began on a Monday, and——"

"Oh, well, that'll do. I don't care for all that, I only ask because I want to have a little chap out here who is just convalescent from it. This air's very fine, and we know what the milk is, and the place is a hundred times healthier than where he now is."

Mrs. Pengelley grew grave at once.

"Take care, John," she said ; "do, pray, take care. Of course he has got a mother, and that sort of young woman is so designing. It's not as though it were Graham ; you wear your kind heart on your coat-sleeve. Do remember your future prospects. His mother's sure to be coming after him."

"Not at all, she will come with him," said John imperturbably.

"With him, John ! What can you mean ? Have you no regard for my present state of failing health ? You shouldn't, John ; there are convalescent homes. I'll ask my brother to give them an order. However quixotic you may be, this is really going too far. I can understand that you wish to do your duty by them, and not to act like Graham ; but really——"

"Mother," shouted John angrily, "be so good as to wait until things are explained to you before you offer opinions upon them. The boy is nothing to me, but I love him as if he were my own, for his mother's sake ; and that mother is one of the sweetest, daintiest women in creation ; she is a lady, in my eyes, without compare. Now, do you understand ? I tell you I mean to have them here, and you must make up your mind to receive them, as soon as the child can be removed from where he now is. I intend to go over and fetch them myself."

"Now, John," urged Mrs. Pengelley querulously, "what is the good of taking things up in that way ? You know how anxious I

am to see you well married, and I'm sure I'm not one of those bigoted women who are always pretending to form their own opinions about what does not concern them. I am thankful to say that I have lived with men all my life, first with my father and brothers, and afterward with your father and yourselves, and I know better than to interfere as women do nowadays about things they cannot possibly understand ; but I do wish that you would find some nice, bright, sensible girl as your wife ; someone who might relieve me of the servants, and the house, and all that. I should be so glad to be able to have more time to rest in my own room, and not to have to see after things at all ; I am not nearly strong enough. As I said, I can make allowances for a flirtation and all that ; but what's the serious use of a woman with a child already, and one she seems to take about with her, too ?”

“Mother, I do wish you could comprehend once for all,” said John, with some extra heat, “that though no doubt you are a most kind and indulgent mother, I do not need these ‘allowances’ you talk of making for me.”

“Well, your brother Graham does, if you don't.”

“I dare say ; but in my opinion, mother, it might have been better, even for him, if he had found you less disposed to be indulgent ; however, that is not the question under discussion between us. I beg you clearly to understand that the lady whom I wish you to invite here with her child is a young widow whose acquaintance I have made in some of the best houses in university society. She came from Australia with her boy, and at present she is staying with Dr. Garfoyle, one of the divinity professors, at St. Amwell's Vicarage. You might call upon her, if you felt your health equal to the drive. The child has had scarlet fever, but is getting on all right now, I believe, and I am anxious to invite them here, for change of air and also because—you may as well understand at once—I admire the mother greatly, and I should be prepared to take that step which you are pleased to say you so greatly desire, with her consent.”

“A widow, a colonial !” said Mrs. Pengelley doubtfully ; discarding her pillow and sitting straight up upon her bed. “She will have too many opinions of her own for this house. Your brothers will not like it, if you do.”

"She certainly has a good many opinions, I believe."

"What age is she? And what is her name?"

"As her boy is seven years old, I take it she must be twenty-seven or thereabouts; but she does not look anything like it. I will tell you all about her if you will write the letter of invitation which I am prepared to dictate, and give it to me to put into her hands at the earliest opportunity I can make."

"Well, I don't really mind widows. I am one myself," said Mrs. Pengelley, as though this were news to her son. "Sometimes they have more sense than young unmarried women; but it all depends on what the first husband was. He is never really dead and buried; they always dig him up again the day they go to church with someone else. It's a truly awful thing, as your dear father used to say, to marry a woman attached to a ghost. I might have married again myself when you were all little fellows; but I knew your dear father would never have wished it. However, as I said, it all depends——"

"Yes, of course, it does depend, mother," said John Pengelley conclusively; "everything always does, you see, and particularly in this instance, on whether she will have me or not."

"Is she rich?" asked Mrs. Pengelley, descending from the bed and slowly making her way to the writing-table.

"In beauty and in debts, but in no other way, I should say, mother; but we have all plenty here for ourselves and our wives. John Bull can afford to tip the colonies yet, when they come home from school."

"Oh, yes; of course you must tip the boy," said Mrs. Pengelley, accepting her son's speech with unimaginative precision. "But I must sleep first before I write any letters, John; it requires consideration."

"No, mother, it requires none from you, and I have already given it all it's going to get from me. I tell you Mrs. Goldenour is a beautiful woman, with manner and wit and words at command; with a knowledge of the world and a remarkable history. She is a woman who will have half the university at her feet, so soon as the young one allows her to show herself in society. Once let the fear of infection subside, and I shall not have another chance except in company with the whole field."

"She has no girls, no more children, I trust?" asked Mrs. Pengelley anxiously.

"Not a ghost of a girl, nor any other boy."

"How long has her husband been dead?"

"Some years. Come, mother, you may as well give in at once. Here is paper, pen, ink, all you require. Now write as I dictate; and remember what lovely times you will have when you can retire in favor of your daughter-in-law. You need scarcely ever see her, if you don't care to; you can have your own rooms shut off with double doors, if you choose; and as for Graham and the others, they can look out for themselves, or behave when they're here."

"They won't like it."

"I dare say not; but who cares?"

"I really don't quite see it," said Mrs. Pengelley; but, as she did it, perhaps that did not matter.

"Don't date it, mother," said her son, leaning over her as she wrote. "I have no intention of sending it by post. I mean to deliver it myself the first day that I've a chance of seeing Mrs. Goldenour."

Accordingly, with his mother's missive safely in his pocket, Mr. John Pengelley presented himself that very afternoon at the vicarage gate.

The vicarage garden in November was still a picturesque place; but somehow or other John Pengelley always found that Nature had a habit of reminding him of eating and drinking. He concluded that vegetable products, such as trees, naturally suggested questions of nutrition, not only to caterpillars; for instance, the beeches, which had now lost their rich autumnal tints, and were of a dull decaying brown, looked like uncooked beet-root; whereas the maples, which had changed their earlier garb of old-rose and saffron, now suggested spoilt strawberries and preserved pineapples done down into one. The leaves of the larches were of the color of pale brown sherry; while the dark shining boughs of some ever-green oaks formed a solid background for these various tints, and reminded him irresistibly of a green baize table-cloth.

It had been a mild damp season, and the beds were still brilliant with dahlias and asters, and with other late autumnal blossoms; while the lawns looked green and fresh in the pale November sun-

light. All this John Pengelley had time to note before Mrs. Pye came to the door, accepted his cards, but rejected his call, and left him to make the best of his way back again to his dog-cart, with his mother's note still reposing in his pocket.

"But why," he thought rebelliously, "should Dr. Garfoyle's table be graced by the presence of the lovely woman whose wit was to his amorous palate like very excellent champagne? Upon such a moral teetotaler as the elderly divinity professor, surely Victoria Goldenour's charms must all be wasted."

For four days Dr. Garfoyle had scarcely seen his fair guest. He had manœuvred to escape her society ; which was easy, as she was in constant attendance upon her boy, who was now bounding and leaping with happy agility toward renewed health. But if he had scrupulously avoided all separate conversation with Victoria, none the less the fact of her presence beneath his roof had possessed him night and day, but he felt the need of time to readjust the mental and moral equilibrium which she had so completely disturbed. Moreover, he shrank with all the sensitiveness of his disciplined nature from seeming to avail himself of her frankness. The words which she had uttered in the abandonment of her grief had been to him rather a revelation of his own inner mind than of her disposition toward him. They had been extorted from her by the stress of circumstances. She had been moved by terror to utter them, as when one cries out in sleep over some ghostly dread. On awakening she might well have forgotten her own words. So he reasoned. If he could be capable of recalling them to her calmer memory, he would be something bearing no resemblance to a gentleman. Yet for himself their effect remained. To himself her cry for help had been nothing less than a trumpet-tongued appeal to a resurrection of his deeper self ; that self which had been buried for long years beneath the monumental stone of custom.

The immediate result was a state of intellectual chaos. He recalled the cold touch of the razor against his throat, and with it the memory of the hot passion which had armed his youthful hand against himself. He remembered the absolute self-mastery of five-and-twenty years. He recalled his earlier views as to the celibacy of the clergy, together with the later modification of opinion which sanctioned marriage only when in it love became sacramental,

passing thus through the material element to a purer atmosphere wherein every loving spirit, whether in the body or out of it, became a divine messenger to man.

It was entirely characteristic of Dr. Garfoyle that the matter took on this wholly inward aspect. It was in this region of thought that the question must be debated, and in no outer court of conduct. Since the crisis of his youth all his life had been regulated before this hidden tribunal of conscience. There and nowhere else must this supreme event of his later years be ordered.

He had been lecturing the evening before for a society of art and literature at the Victoria Rooms, on the "Monastic Asceticism of the Middle Ages"; and his mind was still as full of his subject as it could be, in subordination to the claims of his strange new love, this love which had awakened the surprised manhood in him; and now it pleased his fancy to trace in himself the rigid spirit of mediævalism, and to welcome in Victoria Goldenour the jubilant spirit of the Renaissance, standing before him with laughing eyes. He saw that there was no reasoned ground-work for her actions; that she conducted her life in a childlike way, urged hither and thither by almost primitive emotions. And for him she represented the world's youth. Her beauty was an assertion of the fact that the lessons of the senses possessed a value which he had neglected, as opposed to the teachings of the intellect which alone he had cultivated. She pictured for him the desirability of æsthetic as contrasted with ascetic cultivation; but how would she meet him in his demand that all powers and passions should alike receive their consecration from sacramental uses?

For a quarter of a century his sensuous nature had been dumb; dust had gathered upon the keys of the instrument; but at the touch of her fingers its notes had mingled with the air of a common day, and the fulness of response had been startling even to himself. Surely his youth was not dead. It had lain in the grave; but it was resuscitated, and in the resurrection which it experienced it arose with new force to add it to the old. At first there had been confusion in his waking thoughts; he had stood as one amazed in an unknown world; now he saw plainly, and was prepared to act deliberately.

On the evening of the same day on which John Pengelley paid

his futile visit, Dr. Garfoyle sent up word to ask Mrs. Goldenour to be kind enough to come down and make his tea, if she could spare him a brief hour. He knew now what he had to say to her. After a brief delay she came.

She entered the room half shyly, and stood smiling upon him from the doorway. Her dress was of soft silk, white, but touched up here and there with bows of heliotrope ribbon, and in her bosom she wore a bunch of heliotrope flowers and of pale yellow roses from his own conservatory. It had not escaped his notice that John Pengelley's flowers had been left neglected on the table in the hall.

In her presence his reawakened senses stirred ; her influence affected him like a delicious draught of fresh spring air ; his perceptions regained their early liberty and began to play their part with keen delight in their new exercise. But the habit of years was dominant still ; the passion was new-born and had no leave to speak. So he received her with apparent calm, though the hand trembled in which she laid her own.

She noted it with the keenness of such a woman.

"I asked for the favor of your company to-night," he said, "because to-morrow I go away."

She started in evident surprise.

"Bruce is so much better now it will not signify that I have to leave. My lectures are finished and my term of residence at the cathedral begins at once. I have three months to keep there now."

"And what are we to do ?" she asked in dismay, which was well affected ; possibly it was quite genuine, for she had even become so accustomed to lean upon him that it struck her as desertion to hear he was going away.

"You will, I trust, be quite comfortable here," he replied, "until you are able to move ; you had better take Bruce to the seaside in about a month's time. Pye and Trupper remain to serve you, and Shadrach is absolutely the best companion possible for Bruce, since he has no nerves and no imagination to trouble himself or anybody else."

"And this is your final suggestion for me," she asked, not without a touch of scorn ; "to live in your house during your absence

as though I were absolutely dependent upon your charity, like the paralyzed woman upstairs? By the way, I have never entered her room since she took me for an angel. If she found me out it might seriously endanger her faith."

"I shall be glad," he answered, controlling himself, "if you will see that she is not neglected during my absence."

Then there was a pause. Victoria drank her tea without trying to conceal the fact that she was letting a few tears fall into her cup.

"Tea and tears aren't nice," she said with a little nervous laugh; presently she added gravely, "Well, if you are going away, I shall have Bruce ill again, that's certain. I am so dreadfully nervous about having the responsibility of his nerves all alone now. You have completely stopped those dreadful scenes he used to go through; how, I'm sure I don't know. Must you really go?"

He bowed assent, and for some seconds they were both silent; then she suddenly rose and stood before him; all the tears were dry now, her eyes shone, and there was a provocative intonation in her voice.

"Well," she said, "who is to speak first? Shall we have 'she to him,' or 'he to her'? If I had my choice I should like the last. I rather think I did begin. Supposing you go on; say it out, even if it is something like this: 'You have put me to no end of trouble and expense, will you be good enough to take yourself off, and to allow the embryo parsons and the museum of patients to return?' Or is it to be 'she to him'?"

And she changed her voice, and became as sweet as a loving child, and as demure as a gentle nun.

"You have been so good to me; so very, very good. No one was ever half so good before. My boy adores you; he owes his life to you. You have done more for him than I should have thought it possible for one human being to do for another. Other men leave me flowers to smell, compliments, civilities, or even sweets to suck. None of these other people that you help are grateful; now, I am. Is there really nothing Bruce and I could do, or be, for you? Is it to be sentiments, or facts first?"

"Facts first," he said with a smile; "dry details, if you please."

"When Bruce was a baby boy," she said, laughing merrily, "he once asked me what sort of 'tails' details were—did the butchers deal in them?"

"The 'dry detail' is that I am a canon of St. Ives, and that I leave Cambridge to-morrow," he said, crossing over to where she now sat and seating himself beside her; "for the rest you make too much of what I have done for you. You speak out of the generosity of your gentle heart. Whatever I remember, I remember only to esteem and bless you for on my side. But I remember also that I am old enough to be your father. If I took advantage of the generous expression of gratitude and affection which overwrought feeling has wrung from you, I should be less of a man and a gentleman than I hope that I am. As to my own feeling about you, I have determined not to permit myself to speak of that at present; but I will ask you this one thing: Will you allow me to come and see you, wherever you may be, when three months are over? You will then have had time to know your own mind."

"A dozen times over, and to change it as many or more," she said coldly. "Now I know you are indeed old enough to be my father, since you can sit there calmly and propose to wait three months before you even come to see me! You are as foolish as old men always are, Dr. Garfoyle! Do you suppose I set about arranging my life by quarters? Why, I never wear the same dress, and I never know my own mind, on two consecutive days. I veer, I tell you, like a straw on a stream, or an eddy on a current. I shall probably go and stop at North Hall directly Bruce is better. Do you know what that means? I am open to the reception of influences from all sides. Don't you know that? You who know so much, do you really know so little of one very trivial woman, young enough to be your daughter? Are you really foolish enough not to take her at her word at once, but to leave her to think *it*, or is it *you*, over?" And as she spoke she put down a tea-cup empty now of tea or tears, and with more scorn added plainly: "Do you suppose you will bear so much consideration, Dr. Garfoyle, and do I require so much from you?"

"Victoria," he said, "this is cruel! It is even more than I can bear! I have determined to go away to-morrow for your sake rather than my own; and I will not tie you by any promise, which

you might easily repent. Can you not see that I have no right to take advantage of your position here? Write to me, I entreat you. Tell me when I may come and see you. I will follow you anywhere, at any time or place, so soon as I receive your bidding; then indeed you will not find me slow to remember the words which you have said to me. I dare not tell you what you are to me. I could never leave you if I did. Do not mock me, I beseech you. Be very sure that as the dearest part of my own life I shall carry with me the thought of you and of your child; more I simply dare not trust myself to say."

"When do the curates come back?" she said irrelevantly; and her question and its tone jarred upon his emotion painfully.

"Surely not so long as you are good enough to make the vicarage your home."

"And who is to pay for all this trouble and expense that I have caused you?"

"I remember only the pure pleasure of your stay; moreover, I have a large income—it is immaterial to me."

"How nice!" said Victoria enthusiastically. "I wish I had. I never can remember what I pay nor what I owe; but my grandfather's check will buy a bottle of sulphuric acid, or whatever is required to purify your rooms. There is no dependence to be placed on me, Dr. Garfoyle; that is how I'm made, I'm a moral chameleon. Somehow I always take my color from the people that I'm with, at least from the men that I'm with, if I must be precise; I cannot remember that any woman ever had any influence over me; most of them strike me as ridiculous or ill-dressed. But I am so good when I'm with you, and I like to feel good, I really do, it's a fact; and then you see it's best for Bruce. He is a terrible responsibility for me alone. I've not a notion how to bring him up. You know he's not a common boy. He's like a Stradivarius among vulgar violins or fiddles, and beneath my fingers he emits shrieks which torture both our nerves; beneath yours he gives forth lovely harmonies. Then, as Mrs. Bratton-Fleming has been careful to inform you, I am the family pauper, I'm everybody's poor relation. They allowance me between them; and I'm never out of debt—and debt is worse than doubt, let me tell you, Dr. Garfoyle, though the nineteenth century doesn't think

so—that is one of the many things you have not found out, and one of the many which I know. There, now I have turned up all my cards. Surely it is your turn to speak. Must I tell you what to say?”

Dr. Garfoyle's resolution, though sorely tried, held good. Her loveliness was enhanced by the soft, rose-colored light which, under her management, had supplanted the harsh yellow glare of the curates' oil lamp, and she was bewitching. He gazed at her with entire absorption.

“Yes,” she nodded, “I know my value.”

“When the day comes,” he murmured, “in which I permit myself to say all that I have in my heart, I shall not need your prompting, Victoria. Believe me, from my very soul the words will flow.”

“Do you really mean to say that you suppose you can admire me more than I admire myself?” she asked with a little incredulous smile.

“Do not try me further,” he entreated; “it is for your sake I go. At your age the months will pass swiftly which at mine will carry the burden of years. After three months, if you will ratify your words, for the rest of your life you shall never know debt nor loneliness again.”

“Do you think,” she responded, “that I should have said all this first if I had not felt the response in your nature? I know you better, Dr. Garfoyle, than you allow yourself to know yourself. I am used to studying men, but you are used to studying priests and curates. It is the man in you I am acquainted with: the priest with whom you carefully take counsel in yourself. I do not like the spirit of the priest. When you are true to the man in you, you are true to your best self; but you are afraid, and conceive that you are most true when you are guided by the cowardly conscience of the monk. See, I can be clever, too, though not in reading books. My only books are the men I meet, my only manuscripts their manners toward me.”

“Do not try me thus, Victoria, once more I entreat you. You exaggerate what I have done for you. You are still under the influence of your recent fears; you want to keep me by your side, as you would keep Bruce's late physician. You would perhaps marry me; but it would be to save your boy. Afterward you

would repent the sacrifice which you had made to your maternal fears ; but if after you have recovered from this dread, and have resumed your normal ways of life, you welcome me back of your own free choice, then you shall find no laggard lover in the man whose nature has been dissolved by his love of you until the very life in his veins he cannot separate from his thought of you. The love of my youth, Victoria, planted fibres in my being which were uprooted only with wrenches of agony ; this later love, my love of you, is my very life itself. You have bridged the chasm between my youth and age ! I owe you more than I can ever repay. Choose to see my face again, and the obligation is on my side. You cannot know all that you are to me. Now, let me go, I entreat you. We shall not meet again here ; I shall have left before you are up in the morning ; but we part as though we parted not."

Deeply moved, he held her silently one moment in his arms, and then put her from him resolutely, and turned to go. Sensitive as she was to outward impressions, her bright face grew serious for a moment, as though she were assisting at a final service. She impulsively tore from her bosom the flowers which she wore there, and putting them into his hands, was herself the first to leave the room.

CHAPTER VIII

LIVE AND LOVE

DR. GARFOYLE had not failed to be particularly struck by Mrs. Goldenour's remark that she had no friends among women. Naturally he missed the point of the observation, and felt very sorry indeed for the other women who had not the inestimable privilege of Mrs. Goldenour's acquaintance. So he turned over in his mind those ladies among his friends' wives in the university, for whom he entertained the greatest regard, with a view of righting this matter.

First and foremost came Mrs. Gruter and her adopted daughter, Helen Keltridge. To the elder of these two ladies he therefore wrote, before leaving home the next morning, requesting her to be

kind enough, out of her regard for himself, to call upon Mrs. Goldenour at St. Amwell's Vicarage, during his absence. He carefully explained the circumstances which detained his visitor, and he strengthened his appeal by the mention of Mrs. Bratton-Fleming's name. It struck him as being only right and seemly, as well as kind, that some lady should take Victoria up and befriend her, and of course he had not the smallest doubt of their all being charmed with her the moment that they really got to know her.

Mrs. Gruter's was one of the most familiar figures among the older members of Cambridge society. She was the wife of Thomas Gruter, M. A., formerly professor of cryptology in the university. For some years now "Professor Gruter," as his wife from force of habit still called him, had been little more than a lay figure. A general decay of all his faculties had overtaken him, hastened by the tragic death of his daughter Margaret and of her husband Chevington Applewood, and the doctors whispered to each other of softening of the brain. He devoted himself chiefly to pottering about his garden, and to the care of poultry and rabbits; but his wife, who was many years his junior, retained all the admirable qualities which had always distinguished her, undimmed by the defeat of fortune, which had wrecked her earlier hopes. The shock which had agitated university society when the bright young wife, Margaret Applewood, was burned to death, was remembered yet; and if any record were needed of it, there was the monument in the college chapel to the memory of her husband, who followed her in two years' time. But this event was now six years old, and, save by Mrs. Gruter, and by Chevington Applewood's sister, Helen Keltridge, the wife of Randal Keltridge, Fellow and mathematical lecturer of his college, these occurrences were at present regarded as belonging to ancient history.

Events move rapidly in a society where individuals are perpetually changing, and where thought is quick to engender new presentations of ideas in ever varying kaleidoscopic forms. Fresh for every day must be the thoughts for the times, like manna, to be newly gathered every morning, with no exception in favor of any day of rest; keep them, and they breed worms. So incessantly changing are the fashions in notions that what on Monday

delighted you by its novelty on Tuesday disgusts you by its commonness and staleness ; nor is the difficulty so much to get a new idea as ever to be permitted to keep one when you have got it.

To Mrs. Gruter and to Helen Keltridge the memory of Chevington and of Margaret Applewood was the consecration of their days. They lived close together and they made out their daily lives in common. So one morning, late in November, Helen looked in upon her adopted parents as usual, and found Professor Gruter engaged in feebly filling an old band-box of his wife's with hay, for the accommodation of a new guinea-pig. She offered her assistance, and was entertained in the intervals by Mrs. Gruter's perusal of the afore-mentioned letter from Dr. Garfoyle with remarks of this nature :

"Now, Helen, pray don't let him tumble all the stuff about the carpet. Put an old table-cloth down, and then attend to this. I want you to listen to me."

Helen Keltridge hastily shoved the guinea-pig back into the box, from which it was escaping, its owner having been apparently unable to foresee that if he left the lid open the creature would get out. The ex-professor had been a leader of thought once ; this was what he had come to.

"Helen," pursued Mrs. Gruter, "I want to know, have you heard of a young woman named Victoria Goldenour—a colonial, fast and a flirt? Her very name doesn't sound reassuring. One of those women that you can't ever imagine being tied to a regulation husband. Have you not heard of her? Well, you never are good at picking up facts. Why, she dined one night at the Lodge, when all the most important folk were there in their best gowns. Somebody failed, so they put her in, and she kept them waiting half an hour, and then appeared with perfect self-possession, dressed like a duchess, and dispensing favors like a queen. Then to make up for coming too late, she stayed so long afterward that they believed she'd come to stop for good and all. The master's wife told me herself that she had all the men round her until eleven, excepting those too old to keep awake. Of course, you know, she dropped her then and there."

"Which wouldn't hurt her much," said Helen coolly.

"Very likely not ; but still, before she could distinguish herself

again, her boy fell ill of scarlet fever, and where do you suppose she got him taken in? What man do you imagine, in the whole of this ancient and honorable university, was so smitten with the charms of the golden one that he placed his house at her disposal as a hospital, his very chamber as a fever ward? Guess! Well, your director, Dr. Garfoyle. It seems that he was so attracted by the manners and appearance of this Victoria Goldenour that he has positively added her fever-stricken boy to the extraordinary menagerie of queer creatures which he keeps to make him feel at home."

"I'm sure it was not for his own sake if he took her in," said Helen positively.

"Oh, in that sense certainly not, no one would suspect him of such a thing; but see here, he asks me to visit her. He pays me a compliment, no doubt, in believing me to be the only woman of my age in university society capable of forgetting what is due to herself—and he is right, I am capable of it upon occasion; and I don't say I won't go; but isn't it Irish? Just like their ways, a pig in the parlor and the poultry on the front-door steps. I hear he had an idiot in the garret, and it happily caught the infection and died, and a paralytic and a consumptive upon the second-floor landing, and half a dozen budding deacons, and a germinating parson lower down; and now it seems he has gone into residence at his cathedral town, and has actually left her in possession of the premises. Now, what do you say to that?"

"That I will go and call upon her, and will save you the trouble, dear mother," said Helen quietly. "If Dr. Garfoyle really thinks her worth taking so much care of, she must be worth our calling upon."

"Oh, I've not the slightest doubt," said Mrs. Gruter, more moderately, "that, in spite of all appearances, she is both poor and proper. Certainly he mentions Mrs. Bratton-Fleming's name, and of course I knew her well; but still all families have their failures, and I don't suppose the Flemings can plead that they are exceptions to the rule."

"Dr. Garfoyle is a man of sound and instructed judgment," said Helen with gentle determination, "and what is good enough for him is good enough for me."

"And what about the infection?" asked Mrs. Gruter. "If you

have no children, your sister Ciceley Silverhayes has, you must remember."

"Oh, Ciceley's children won't be here till Christmas," answered the younger woman; "and, as for me, I see worse cases every day, down in the district, than I am likely to see in the vicarage. Now, Professor Gruter, I think that that bed is nicely made, and that if we take the guinea-pig out carefully, we can safely introduce him to it."

"Well, guinea-pigs, rabbits, and canaries are bad enough company in all conscience," sighed Mrs. Gruter, "but paralytics, paupers, and idiots are worse. Helen, will any woman ever arrive at the real comprehension of any man? Will she ever be able to explain satisfactorily their devotion to what they are pleased to call facts? See what it comes to, a guinea-pig is a fact. Poor dear!—I mean Thomas, and not the pig—their immersion in the concrete, even at their best; their subjugation to their senses—look at even such a saint as Dr. Garfoyle—their passion for verbal accuracy combined with their rampant inconsistencies of conduct; their immense conception of their own superiority to all women, and their utter ineffectiveness in the hands of the first woman who chooses to subjugate them! Take your friend Dr. Garfoyle, now; the man possesses the tongue of the rhetorician, the learning of the erudite recluse, the pen of the cultivated writer, the sanctity of the mediæval saint, together with the complex experience necessary for guiding his conduct in the nineteenth century; and yet what is the result? From all that I can hear he has positively fallen a victim, at fifty years of age, to a designing widow with a pretty face, an empty purse, startling frocks, and impudence to match them. The better the man the bigger the drop. The sinner's singed and suspicious; the saint's sure, and safe to slide."

"Dear mother," Helen said, "it amuses you to say these things; but I cannot think it credible of Dr. Garfoyle. He is too calm and temperate in action; too well versed in all the data of society. It is surely more likely that popular report has pronounced judgment rashly and without pausing to discriminate. The judgment of the multitude is the coarsest generalization upon earth. Every noble soul exceeds its measure."

"The saints will not succeed in ruling either in the church or in

the world," said Mrs. Gruter in reply, "unless they keep their common wits about them; and your friend Dr. Garfoyle is one who should know how to rule men and women too."

"I mean to go and see her, Mrs. Gruter, and then I'll tell you what I think of it," said Helen Keltridge cautiously.

Now, Helen had a great regard for Dr. Garfoyle. It was an old story, dating from years back, when he had stood her friend in a painful crisis of her life; and her confidence in his judgment was as unabated as her affectionate regard. To her he had been a prophet; and she regarded herself as this prophet's servant. In any cause which he undertook, her zeal was stirred to further and to follow him. Hence she allowed not a day to pass before she went to pay her promised call on his guest.

She entered the vicarage garden by the gate in the wall, and to reach the front door she must pass by the flagged court, where the poplars and the aspens now covered the pavement with pale yellow leaves. Within a stone's throw was the greenhouse on her right. Now, Dr. Garfoyle was fond of his flowers, and he took much interest in this same house, which was, in fact, a conservatory of considerable size, standing by itself in the garden. It was kept well warmed, was filled with brilliant blossoms, and was much used by the students as a lounge, where they might smoke at leisure.

Helen Keltridge was not short-sighted, and as she passed this pleasant retreat she distinctly saw sitting amid the flowering shrubs the figures of a man and woman. Without turning to look directly in their faces she could not have identified them afterward, but she received a very distinct impression that the lady was young, of brilliant coloring, and elegantly dressed, and that she was leaning back and playing with a spray of Cape jessamine, while a handsome, florid man, in a corresponding wicker chair, large and low, leaned toward her, cigar in hand, but not in mouth; and that it was more likely from his attitude that eager words rather than smoke were issuing from his lips.

Mrs. Trupper knew Helen Keltridge well, as one of Dr. Garfoyle's lady helpers, and she came to the door. "Yes, Mrs. Goldenour was in," she said, admitting her. The atmosphere of the vicarage drawing-room was new to Helen; a strange subtle per-

fume, intensely sweet and penetrating, yet subdued and indefinable, filled the air ; a certain rearrangement of furniture and ornament had been effected ; all traces of the curates' presence had vanished from the room ; so had the Japanese umbrella from the fire-place, and the missionary box from the table ; a bright fire burned on the hearth, before which upon the rug sat the most lovely boy that Helen Keltridge thought she had ever beheld. He was fabricating a little ladder of twigs, bound with threads of colored worsted, turning it cleverly with active, tasteful fingers.

"A ladder for my toad," he explained ; "we keep it in the greenhouse, and I am making a ladder for it to climb up and catch flies when it can't reach them ; but Mr. John Pengelley is there now talking to mother, and they sent me away ; and I'm so afraid he'll step on it, he is so huge and 'stomping.'"

"You are Mrs. Goldenour's little boy?"

"Yes, I am Bruce, Bruce Goldenour ; and you had better not come too near me. I've had a fever and I might give it to you, though I haven't got it now."

"Mrs. Goldenour is not at home," said the woman Trupper, opening the door, and using an indignant tone, in which there was no concealment. The child opened his clear eyes widely, and said :

"No, mother is not in the house ; but you might go into the greenhouse and look at the toad without disturbing them ; he is such a beauty, so big and fat, and he is eating flies all the day long."

"That is *her* child," said Mrs. Trupper, as she showed the visitor out. "It's not my boy—not my Shadrach, you know, Mrs. Keltridge."

Mrs. Keltridge said that she was quite aware of the fact, that indeed it did not need stating.

"No, that boy's delicate and nervous," said Mrs. Trupper, "very different to the fine coloring of my Shadrach."

"His hair is very beautiful," said Helen, "the way it lies in curls and rings upon his forehead is quite striking."

"My sister, Mrs. Pye, is vexed about it," said the jealous mother ; "she says she can do nothing with it. You should see Shadrach's now, Mrs. Keltridge ; I give it a turn with the tongs every Sunday, and it stands up beautiful."

As Helen again passed the conservatory, the unabashed lady and gentleman sat there still, and she went home feeling more anxious on Dr. Garfoyle's account than she had thought possible.

"Now she is gone!" said John Pengelley, turning again eagerly to his fair companion.

"Who is she, this 'Mrs. Keltridge'?" said Victoria, holding in her hand the card Trupper had presented.

"Oh! a don's wife. I'm not a university man myself, and I don't admire the breed. I like the man who knows the stock from the muzzle end of a gun, and who can mount a horse without the aid of his cook with a kitchen chair!" Victoria laughed incredulously. "Facts, I assure you. For the rest, she is one of Dr. Garfoyle's district ladies; one of his parish adorers, without a doubt. Her husband's something in one of the colleges, but I can't tell you much about them. I know her sister better; she is more to my taste. She's the wife of Dr. Silverhayes, and they own the Manor House, out our way; but we don't see much of them, they live mostly up in town; he's a well-known doctor. As for the Keltridge, this lady's husband, he's just a surly don, dry as a stick, and churlish in manner. It was said he went out of his mind for a couple of years after their marriage, and went off to America and left her in peace; however that may be, they are inseparable now; instances of——"

"'Dull duality,' 'monotonous monogamy.' Is either of those the phrase you require?" asked Victoria sarcastically.

"I say, you are sharp. Do leave off being clever," said John ruefully.

"Well, well," continued Victoria, "don't be jealous of my wits; you wouldn't know how to use them if you'd got them, you know. Tell me some more about Mrs. Keltridge, since I shall have to return her call. I don't suppose she knows much about how to make herself agreeable to any husband. These pattern women never do. Soul-union with the clergy is the thing they sigh for. One and all they are old maids in marriage."

John Pengelley lighted his cigar and regarded her with lazy admiration.

"You ought to have gone in and seen her, you know. She'll tell of us. She must have seen us when she passed."

"Yes, I know she did," answered Victoria; "but I shall make it

all right to-morrow. I saw at a glance that she was far too good for you, and I didn't want her here. I shall go and see her to-morrow, when I have arranged my conscience, my countenance, and my costume suitably. The transition from your society to hers would have been too abrupt ; I should have felt a hypocrite, and I'm not that truly."

"What are you, Mrs. Goldenour ? I wish you would tell me ?" asked her companion earnestly.

"A mirror for men's minds," she answered. "I give you back yourselves softened and refined and beautiful, and you fall in love just with yourselves in me."

"And what do you fall in love with in us ?" he asked rashly, with a bold glance of undisguised admiration.

"*When* I love you, then I will tell you that," she answered. "Until you have heard me say 'I love you,' do not dare to ask me such a question again. Why, I haven't even said 'I like you' yet."

He reddened and threw away the cigar.

"If you haven't said it, you've acted it !" he exclaimed angrily.

For answer she returned him the box of bonbons, which lay untouched in her lap, and rose to depart. He detained her eagerly.

"Listen to me, Victoria," he said. "You shall not go until you've given me a fair chance of a hearing once for all. I shall not worry you. You know I'm not that sort of man ; and I'll be your friend until you change your mind or see your way. I am an honorable man ! but I want you for my wife, and I cannot quite understand what's against me as a husband. Why not take me out and out ? But if you cannot see your way, well, I will wait ; you need never fear any embarrassment from me, I'm not a sentimental, selfish brute ; you have been very kind to give me your sweet company, and I will wait, if I must ; but where's the rub ? What's wrong with me ?"

"Oh, yes, you have been very good and kind," said Victoria, relenting visibly, "and when I get away and think it over, I may know why it is it would not do. If I could tell you, I rather think that I could take you, John Pengelley ; the fact is that you would not understand. I hardly do myself ; but I think that it is this—if I were quite sure I had not got a soul, then I would marry you, John Pengelley."

Mr. Pengelley indulged in a frank burst of laughter.

"Upon my word," he said, "they have been guilty of converting you down here. They have doubtless been inducing you to barter the certain comfort of the present for the problematical gain of a very doubtful future. Am I, then, the discredited present? Capital! But I happen to remember how they sent you back to me, shivering and sad, your sweet eyes wet with tears, your adorable figure swathed in a dripping, dingy cloak; and I knew how to comfort you. Be warned, child, take my motto, 'Live and love.' If this must even be the end of the pleasure I have had in you, and—let me add it—you in me, surely it was worth the trouble of our entrance here. But why should this be the end? Think what pleasure you and I might find in life together. You have been playing with me—yes, I know it—and I have enjoyed the game; but I am serious now, nay, desperately in earnest. Take me, and I shall know no wish beyond. Depend upon it, Victoria, in spite of all they say down here, there is a heaven of enjoyment upon earth if you take it as it comes, and change it when it goes. Nay, do not look at me with memory in your eyes, you shall not. I will not be murdered by your past; an English government doesn't sanction the suttee. I have never seen the trouble yet, nor do I believe that such exists, which may not be alleviated by what are stupidly styled 'creature comforts.' Come! I am rich and you love luxuries, let me have the pure joy of providing them for you and yours. There's a lot of rot talked by sentimentalists and pietists all up and down the land, and old women and ugly women always abound to cry in concert with their pessimistic utterances; but the fact remains that so long as one has youth and energy as a man, or youth and beauty as a woman, one has only to be true to Nature and she herself will find us consolation."

"So you have your system of philosophy if you are not a don," said Victoria, smiling, when he paused for breath.

"Therein lies the sum of all human wisdom—that is all the law and the prophets," he continued eagerly. "Be true to your own nature. I therefore consult my own happiness as a man by following the bent of my own desires. I like a good wine and I drink it, a good cigar and I smoke it, a good dinner and I eat it; but as I should be nothing better than a brute if I pursued these joys alone,

since they only acquire their fullest zest when enjoyed in company, I fulfil my destiny when I adore you ; in your presence I reach my highest state of perfection. I shall never be better nor greater than it lies in your power to make me with a word. The worm may be my heir ; what matter, so long as we have not missed our present good in some mistaken pursuit of a vain mirage !”

“ But have you no soul, John Pengelley ? ” she enquired, as she reached out her hand for the bonbons again, and put one into her mouth.

“ As an individual man, none,” he answered stoutly. “ Woman is the soul of man. Supply my lack, I do entreat you.”

“ All life is so difficult,” she murmured to herself, as she sucked the sugared cream thoughtfully.

“ Not at all. It’s perfectly easy. Live and love. Come to me. I swear I’ll take care of you and of your boy. We will make the little chap strong among us : he shall have a fine country life, plenty of breezy fields to range over, good milk to drink, his choice of a dog, and a pony of his own.”

“ Hadn’t you better bring the cow here to show me ? ” she asked mischievously. What wonder the poor fellow looked annoyed ? “ I have told you, John Pengelley, if I were quite sure I had no soul and Bruce no intellect, we would accept your offer with thanks ; as I remain doubtful upon both these points, we had better keep away. We certainly cannot accept your mother’s kind invitation.”

“ It’s all the cursed doing of these anæmic parsons,” he shouted angrily ; “ they’ve spoilt you among them.”

“ As this is Dr. Garfoyle’s greenhouse, and as I am his guest, I will not permit you to say a word against him,” she replied warmly. He looked rebuked.

“ At least,” he said, “ tell me where you are going, for I don’t suppose you intend to remain here ? ”

“ I go to Paris, *en route* for Nice, with my boy next week. I wish the child to winter in a better climate. I have friends in Paris, whose views of life are artistic. I like varieties in views as well as in costumes, and I seek both there.”

“ But how about the funds ? ” he enquired with embarrassment, the ruddy color deepening in his tanned cheeks ; “ you will possibly need——”

"I shall need nothing but what I have already got, and if I had occasion to borrow of either of my kind friends, I should, frankly, prefer the canon's check to the squire's."

"Why, may I ask?" he said with evident anger.

"Because the canon's check would bear a celestial countersign. It would be honored up above; while yours I could never hope to repay. No, I will not have anything further from you, save the memory of your past kindness; and now, if we have done talking, perhaps you had better go away. Your horses will tire of standing at the gate so long."

He made a movement of impatience.

"May I not come again before you leave?"

"In no case, unless you desire to see Mrs. Trupper. You will not find me if you come. This little episode is ended. Say we have enjoyed it: it is time 'to change our pleasures.' Good-by, John Pengelley. Your dinner will console you: you told me so, you know."

After this the words that Mr. John Pengelley uttered as he departed were fit neither for children's nor for curates' ears to hear.

CHAPTER IX

A TOSS UP

VICTORIA stood before her glass, putting upon her head an exquisite thing in lace and flowers, preparatory to returning Mrs. Keltridge's inconvenient call. She felt dull. Dr. Garfoyle might be quite middle-aged, almost elderly indeed; yet his presence lent a motive to the minutes, which were rendered monotonous and meaningless by his absence. She welcomed the interruption of Bruce, bounding in with a telegram in his hand.

"How nice of you, boy, to bring mother a telegram! It may mean something has happened; the worst of it is there are so few pleasant things that can happen at all; the choice is small."

"Well, is this a good one or a bad one, mother?" the child asked, watching her anxiously.

"That is more than I can tell you, Bruce," she said, flinging down the paper. "Your great-grandfather, Sir Victor Bruce, is dead, but whether that's good or bad for himself or for us, who knows? Not I. It may cost us a hundred and fifty a year," she continued, taking the child into her confidence, whether he understood or not, according to the unwise way of widowed mothers, "or it may exalt us to the proud position of independent legatees. Your great-grandfather has always shown a certain interest in you, boy, and you are his only living male representative; he sent a hundred pounds when you were ill."

"And did I drink it all in medicine?" asked the child ruefully.

"Not quite. There's one bright penny left. You may have it. There it is."

"Could you make it two halfpennies, mother, that I might give Shadrach one? He is sitting on the floor with me before the dining-room fire with silkworms crawling all over him, because the mulberry leaves are dead, and they fall sick on lettuce leaves."

"Not I, Bruce. Run off now, I'm going out to pay a call. This death is a nuisance," she said to herself as she descended the stairs; "now we must wait where we are until I learn our fate. I shall have to marry in order to support that child, if we are forgotten."

So lifting one foot in hope and dropping the other in fear, Victoria carried her handsome garments through the town, across the college grounds and by the river bridge, till she reached Mrs. Keltridge's abode. Helen Keltridge sat alone in her drawing-room when the visitor was announced. Her husband was busied in some distant college library. She was not slow to notice that Mrs. Goldenour was of a wholly different type from the women—wives of M. A.'s chiefly—by whom she lived surrounded: they possessed a confidence of manner, based upon their husbands' achievements in academic arenas, wholly foreign to the pretty air of diffidence at present displayed by this captivating intruder.

Victoria Goldenour had only herself to depend upon, only herself to recommend herself. The academic dames by whom she was looked down upon in Cambridge society, had their husbands' places in a Tripos List, a given number of years ago, as a basis for their pretensions. They proudly felt themselves to be ennobled by

the quality of their husbands' brains. She, the independent daughter of the Antipodes, cared as little for all their petty distinctions as she did for the aristocratic claims of her own and her late husband's families. How a person dressed, looked, and talked was what Victoria cared for, and for little more. Surely an approximation toward a higher standard, in that it was self-reliant.

At present Victoria bent over her teacup, and with a charming air of deference to the opinion of a superior person, she explained to Mrs. Keltridge her sense of indebtedness to Dr. Garfoyle, and her desire to find some suitable expression for her feelings. Mrs. Keltridge replied that she too shared that same burden of gratitude; and that she held that by serving those whom he cared for, Dr. Garfoyle might best himself be served. Then Victoria told the tale of the paralyzed woman whom he had asked her to take care of; and who had mistaken her for a real live angel, caught and sent down to blow away her doubts; so monstrous was her estimate of her own deserts.

"Naturally I imagined," she said, "that when she found me out she would never make it up with Heaven again. On the contrary—who would have credited it?—she was simply dissolved in ecstasies of gratitude to the Almighty for giving her a constantly recurrent angel all to herself to tend her personally. She veritably believes that I descend diurnally from a higher sphere to feed her with gruel; and all because she is so deserving and I smell so sweet!"

"There are many here far cleverer than poor Mrs. Pettit," answered Helen, "who estimate the value of their own faith so highly that they demand payment in the same coin as the price of its purchase."

"The poor dear little flea was hungry, and so God made me to be a dinner for him'—my boy Bruce said that, one day, Mrs. Keltridge, when he was younger and possibly wiser than he is now. It's a pretty story, with a neat application. I make you a present of it for your Cambridge dinner-parties."

Helen laughed, but before she could continue the subject Victoria had abruptly changed it.

"May I talk freely to you?" she said, "or are you going to be shocked because I cannot be conventional? I have been very

lonely always. It has been my own fault; I have never cared enough about other women, nor considered how they thought; but now I have come to a point when it would interest me to learn how you, for instance, who are evidently a friend of his, look at Dr. Garfoyle. Did you never think of marrying him, Mrs. Keltridge?"

"I was married long before I knew him," answered Helen shortly.

"Well, but have you never looked at him and considered what sort of a husband he would make?" Victoria asked, leaning forward with childlike gravity in her low chair. "Doesn't one always look at men in that light? I do."

"No," said Helen briefly; "I look upon them as friends."

"Dear me, what's the good of that?" enquired Victoria, with apparent innocence; then, with a little puzzled smile, she quickly asked, "Mrs. Keltridge, tell me now, and do not be offended, what gain has love brought you—you personally, I mean?"

"Love," said Helen, rather to herself than to her questioner, "I have often thought, has lessons which transcend its gifts. It has taught me many things."

"Chiefly how to suffer," flashed out Victoria, with one of the sudden gleams of insight which characterized her quick nature.

"Perhaps all things in life that are worth possessing are the purchase of our pain," replied Helen.

"Not a bit of it! Don't you believe that," said Victoria confidently. "In a common, vulgar way, of course, it may be true; Bruce is the dearest thing that I possess on earth, and, of course, in a certain sense it was true of him; but it was not true of my beautiful young husband. There was no silence, no reserve in all our love. It was perfect; living, throbbing, pulsing with the breaths of our strong young lives. We had no fear of each other; we never dreaded criticism from each other. I was sure that all that I did was perfect in his eyes as I was myself, and all that he did was good and lovable in mine. He gave me five years of absolute, pure gladness, unspoiled by any darker background. Until the moment that he lay dying at my feet, he never brought to me one single hour of pain. No; I believe in love, and life, and joy, quite disassociated from any awful gain of misery."

"And yet you would marry again?" questioned Helen.

"Naturally ; we always agreed that we would do so. We told it to each other between two kisses on the deck of the steamship *Cassandra*, in the Bay of Naples, on a moonlight night, when all the sea ran and rippled with gold, and we sat melted together in the mysterious shining haze beneath one covering on a deck lounge. We agreed to set each other free if death came between us. Frank would have done it long ago, I know, had he been in my place. Dear fellow, he was always so unselfish. Either he is dead, quite dead, and it doesn't matter what I do, or what becomes of me ; or if he is alive, why, then, dear Mrs. Keltridge, I am very sure that Love and he play comrades yet. Would I have him wait for me ? I could not be so cruel ! I have been selfish, as it is, to hold him a prisoner in my heart so long."

"Are you quite a heathen, do you think, Mrs. Goldenour ?" asked Helen gently.

"No, I believe I am chiefly classic, dear Mrs. Keltridge," she replied.

This way of looking at things struck Helen as so novel that she was not ready to reply.

"And it is not," went on Victoria, putting a scented morsel of muslin to her eyes, "as though, if I married Dr. Garfoyle, I should be considering myself, you see. After the love that I have known, what could such an experience be to me ? First, I should marry him for Bruce's sake, it would be very good for him ; secondly, to prove my gratitude, and to set my first love free ; thirdly, it might make me good to sacrifice myself to the highest end I see. Only I should want to play the fool sometimes. We all do, you know. Oh, I beg your pardon, I can well believe you never do—and I fear that Dr. Garfoyle might object to that."

"Then why not try Mr. John Pengelley ?" asked Helen satirically.

"My digestion would be unequal to the post," Victoria replied demurely. "I fear I should lose my complexion and grow dyspeptic as his wife. I could not live on 'Fondants' ever after. Can't you understand, Mrs. Keltridge, that I really meant to do a good action in marrying Dr. Garfoyle, to show my gratitude, and to give my boy a good guardian ; and that as for me," she added plaintively, "it might as well be he as another, now."

Helen was touched, in spite of herself.

It was just this unexpectedness, this entire absence of the artificial reserves by which most women surround themselves, which made Victoria so fascinating. Helen was conscious of a growing interest in her companion's unconventional, yet evidently genuine modes of speech. Her freshness was that of a pure spring morning, the expression of her emotions was absolutely unartificial; it was also abundantly manifest that she meant what she said when she expressed her conviction that she owed her child's life to Dr. Garfoyle's care, and that she was anxious to find the best form for expressing her gratitude.

"Might one not bring into his life," she questioned, "all those elements in which it has been lacking? Might one not teach his cramped, infolded senses to spread themselves forth like sea anemones that have been left withered and dry, reviving when the fresh salt tides pour over them? Say, shall I pay him back that way for all he has done for me? You answer, you know him best."

"The idea is so foreign to my way of thinking in connection with Dr. Garfoyle," answered Helen; "but yet I can see that there is truth in your criticism; he has undoubtedly given scope to his emotional nature only in the region of æsthetic religious symbolism. Marriage would be to him a sacrament."

Victoria jumped up, put down her teacup, and clapped her hands.

"There, now," she said to her astonished acquaintance, "haven't I brought you to the point? And what is a sacrament, I wonder, but a lovely sign of some inner transcending beauty; and if one person brings the inner perfection and the other the outer attraction, have you not your sacramental notion very fitly represented?"

Helen answered:

"*You* proceed along the lines of outer perfection to your fuller development, *he* radiates his inner harmony, giving it outer form hitherto denied it, by your aid; is that your notion—to complete his existence?"

"Yes," said Victoria, "to teach him, in return for that which he has done for me, all that he is ignorant of, to teach him the value of pleasure."

"But, excuse me," said Helen, "how about that other gentleman—Mr. John Pengelley was it not—with whom I saw you yesterday? I should say he scarcely needs the same system of education, and yet you appeared to be administering it to him."

"Ah, that is the worst of me," said Victoria candidly, "that I am not consistent. I am opalescent; I change my color according to my environment. I have got all I have now said out of your mind far more than out of my own, in the shape in which I have stated it. It was not there when I entered your room; nor will it be in time to come, even if I attempt to carry it out. But what is yours and what is mine I could not tell you, any more than I could tell you how I shall act in the end. I am just a moral mirror, I reflect the minds of those I am attracted by; and I like you, Mrs. Keltridge"—she said this, holding out her pretty hands impulsively—"though you are grave and sensitive and have clearly suffered strangely in your life"—Victoria was mindful of John Pengelley's tale when she made this observation. "No, do not be afraid, I shall not ask you questions which you would not answer if you could; but your ways of looking at life are those of the women of your rank and class; conventions cloud your judgment; a narrow training restricts your faculties and uses to the man you love, and seek to serve, whether as wife or friend. Emancipate yourself, I entreat you, my sweet acquaintance—I dare not call you 'friend,' lest you should deny me the right to do so. Yet, listen; see, I have got up to go, we shall not meet again. My debts here are paid by somebody; I take it by our mutual friend; my grandfather is dead, and I only wait in England to learn how I am affected by his will. Think of me kindly if you can, for, indeed, if I am not as good and true as you, yet the man that I shall marry will be twice the man that such sweet saints as you could make him. I too believe in sacramentalism, as you tell me Dr. Garfoyle does; and I would surround the symbolism of the senses with all that music, beauty, art, the religious sentiment can bring; for the gospel of the senses is a true gospel yet! That is my last word to you, who have despised it."

"You have the artistic temperament, I the dramatic," answered Helen, smiling, as Victoria took her leave. "I thank you for pro-

viding me with a new and strange study, wherein I recognize our diversity and yet acknowledge our affinity. Good-by."

"Well, and what is the 'golden one' like, good or bad?" asked Mrs. Gruter, when Helen was dining with her and Professor Gruter that evening. "So very good that she might be very bad, perhaps, eh? Is that it?"

"She is a very attractive creature," said Helen thoughtfully, "a woman whom it is impossible to know without feeling strongly about. A man could do nothing else with her except fall in love with her; she was not made for anything else that I can see. Yet she is perfectly good in the ordinary sense of the term, almost innocent; only it is a wise innocence and an unconventional innocence; still you feel she has her own canons of right and wrong; her own standard of taste, but anyone who expects her to conform to the one in vogue wherever she may happen to be, will probably be disappointed. She has not acquired the art of connecting wrong with what most women have been artificially brought up to regard as wrong because it is inexpedient. She knows that her power lies in her own loveliness, just as another woman knows that her power lies in her intellect or her wealth, and she states it freely. She uses her beauty as a gift which she is not at all disposed to hide. There must have been many more women like her in the olden days, before women had acquired a sixth sense, not of what is wrong, but of what is proper and what is not proper."

"Just so," said Mrs. Gruter, poking the fire over which they sat, while the professor slept upon a couch; "she seems to me to date back to Adam and Eve in the garden. Unfortunately, Eve would certainly have been proctorized if she were to have reappeared here now, and I hear that your fair friend did, at any rate, attract the attention of the junior marshal, she made herself so conspicuous by standing in the aisle when the bishop preached on Sunday. But what is she going to do? To earn a soul by marrying a divinity professor, and to convert him in exchange to the 'Gospel of the Senses'! Good Heavens! are we at the end of 'this skeptical nineteenth century,' as the magazines call it, and do we hear such bargains actually debated? And to leave her early husband free to contract celestial unions in the skies! Helen, she raves!"

"No," said Helen, "she is quite sincere."

"Well, women used to sell their souls, or we've been told so, in the Middle Ages, to sundry forms of fiends; surely it is reserved for these their daughters to redeem them by intermarrying with the saints; that is the best that we can say. But, pray, when does this precious person go away?" asked Mrs. Gruter.

"She leaves for Paris on Tuesday," said Helen.

"Ah, yes," observed Mrs. Gruter comfortably, "I could have told you she was going to Paris. I could have taken a 'Cook's' ticket for her there, with her boy and maid and a mountain of luggage, without asking her destination. No doubt Paris is her Eden, and Monte Carlo her Paradise. There we may hope she will stay and flourish."

"I think you are too severe upon her, mother," said Helen, as she rose to depart.

"Not I, my daughter; but you are sure to be made the confidante, if not the dupe, of many an Eve, before you learn the wisdom of allowing no other woman more liberty of speech or action than you claim for yourself. Do that, and you will be safe."

Then Helen Keltridge put her things on and went home by the sodden, dripping pathways, where her footfall, resting on couches of yellow autumn leaves, made no sound as she passed along, musing silently on Victoria Goldenour and on her ways of looking at life, and contrasting them as fairly as possible with her own, not entirely to Victoria's disadvantage after all.

Mrs. Goldenour did leave the vicarage, but not until a week later than she had intended, for Sir Victor Bruce's death delayed her departure. That worthy old gentleman had, it seemed, done his duty by his great-grandson, and had left him an ample fortune. But, apparently mistrusting his mother's discretion, the boy's uncle on the other side, Sir Peregrine Goldenour, was left, to the exclusion of Victoria, the child's sole guardian and trustee.

This was a terrible blow to Victoria. She could not bear the Peregrine Goldenours, and it must be admitted the feeling was mutual. She would even have chosen that her darling should be poor, if poverty meant dependence upon herself. She would now be more than ever at the mercy of her husband's family; they must pay her for Bruce's education such sums as they might think proper, while they would have the specious excuse for keeping her

perpetually short of cash, that it was all accumulating for Bruce's majority. It was hard of the old man only to regard the boy as his deceased son's grandson, and to refuse to recognize his mother's rights also. She was glad he was dead, and she hoped he was uncomfortable wherever he might be placed. That Bruce would be a rich man when he came of age was, no doubt, a consolatory reflection, but it seemed about as remote as the thought of heaven, and as inapplicable to present circumstances. But that shillings and sovereigns were to be doled out to her for the next thirteen years at Sir Peregrine Goldenour's sole will and pleasure was too aggravating an arrangement to be accepted tranquilly. She must certainly marry someone, in order to provide for herself now, and to disconcert them.

She stood before her glass, arrayed in a pleasant tea-gown; her little son stood by her side patting the bows of ribbon on her skirt with his childish fingers, and furtively admiring his pretty mother, whose eyes shone so brightly, and whose cheeks had a warm, rosy flush like a babe's aroused from slumber, and impatient of superior control over the conditions of its natural existence.

"Where's the bright penny I gave you the other day, Bruce?" she asked. "I want it to toss up; go and fetch it. Heads Dr. Garfoyle, tails John Pengelley," she murmured, as the boy departed.

"Now, Bruce, attend," she said, as the little fellow, panting with his run, handed her the coin. "I shall want you to observe carefully where the penny goes and to pick it up. Now then, mind; heads the canon, tails the squire."

But the vicarage boards were old, and the room was scantily furnished; there were only strips of carpet by the beds. The shining copper fell and rolled, disappearing beneath Bruce's bed. The child pursued it, wriggling his flat, lithe body into the narrow space.

"It's rolling edgeways, mother, oh, so fast! You didn't toss properly—women can't. Oh! it has gone into my dear little mouse's hole, and will frighten him so. It will fall upon his dear little head, just as he is wishing his babies good-night, and he will wonder what harm he has done."

"Then if it has gone down the mouse-hole, it is neither one nor the other," said Victoria to herself, in purring tones. And she

took a candle, pushed the bed aside, and, stooping down, peered into the darkness. Bruce lay flat on the floor beside her, his fair rings of hair mingling with her burnished chevelure, his eyes gleaming as they gazed down into the dusky aperture, in his eager solicitude as to the feelings of the mouse whose domesticities had thus been made the sport of human vicissitudes.

"It's quite gone, mother," he said. "What a pity. Now the mouse knows more than you do, and he will never tell you what he knows. What were you going to do it for? Shall I borrow you another penny?"

But Victoria jumped up, and pushing back the furniture gleefully, caught hold of her boy and danced with him round the room; exclaiming, in the intervals of the mad whirl when she stopped perforce for breath, and caught the child up in her arms:

"The Mouse Tower on the Rhine, Bruce; do you remember whom we met there? No, you were too young. And he has a villa at Nice, I know. The portent is clear and conclusive. Adieu, Dr. Garfoyle," and she kissed her fingers to the east. "Good-by, John Pengelley," and she blew a salute to the north. "Live Brabazon-Farnaby!" and she gracefully bowed her head to the south.

CHAPTER X

A MAN AND A BROTHER

THOSE who had only seen Dr. Garfoyle in the simple vicarage of St. Amwell's had not made full acquaintance with the man. To be known at his happiest he must be visited at the canon's house in the close. It was in this spacious dwelling-place, dominated by the architectural glories of the cathedral, that he felt himself really at home. The houses stood in the midst of stretches of velvet lawns, bordered by oval courts or quaint flower-gardens, while pleasant meadows surrounded them, whose waters fed a sparkling stream, the course of which was outlined far below by willows delicately sketched against a blue-gray sky. Above the stately elms, tenanted by their citizens the rooks, rose the glorious fabric of the

cathedral, roof over roof, spire above spire, each differentiated from its neighbor by some peculiar glory of its own.

Here upon a rising eminence, but little lower than that which the cathedral occupied, stood ranged the houses of the close, all of gray stone, ancient, solid, and dignified. Dr. Garfoyle's was clothed in ivy, from paving-stone to gray slated roof; and above the ivy in autumn days the crimson fingers of the Virginia creeper flung blood-red tendrils everywhere. In the soft mellow light of a fading afternoon, in the chill month of February, their grip of the old house covered the whole of its venerable face with a delicate tracery of snow, lodged there by its aid.

As Dr. Garfoyle stood upon his own door-step, preparatory to crossing the courtyard to the cathedral, the whole of its western façade fronted him. From base to apex of golden cross, he lifted his eyes in entire content. On buttress and parapet the silvery streaks of snow lay in level lines, marking three distinct altitudes in the vast column of stone; its imposing walls here and there streaked with shadowy patches of greener light, where the mosses and lichens had grown in sheltered corners so luxuriantly with the lapse of years, that they wore an autumnal mantle yet, despite the encroachments of the snow.

Through the open doorway, from his post of observation, Dr. Garfoyle could catch a glimpse now and then of the sombre stained-glass windows of the transepts and could note a handful of solitary worshippers moving across the central aisle, beneath the fretted glories of the majestic roof. Here it was that his external surroundings most fitly mirrored the veritable truths of the man's nature. Here was the shrine of his own soul, the spot where all the mystic side of his temperament sought and found its satisfaction. Here he enjoyed not merely a restful dwelling-place, but an antechamber wherein he waited for the eternal. Here the daily sound of prayer and musical service was to him absolutely harmonious. And the course of day and night, measured by the cathedral chimes, fed the vitalizing stream of strenuous endeavor by which he sought to stem the torrent of human misery and crime which constantly flowed around him.

Attracted by the elaborate nature of a ritual which he prized, less for the gratification of the æsthetic sense than for the inner

symbolism which inspired its beauties ; uplifted by the harmonies of musical sound reverberating in the dim spaces of the cathedral aisles, he often lingered alone after the last worshipper had departed, in this spot consecrated by the records of ages and by the incense of the prayers of centuries.

Here amid the glories of early English architecture, in these solemn aisles thickly set with clustered pillars, he rose above the sordid realities of his external experience. Here he assimilated the beauty of his environment. All that was artistic, cultivated, æsthetic in his many-sided nature here found its manifestation. Here the infinite and external seemed to flow perennially around him, uplifting him on the flood-tides of Divine energy. Here he found the mysterious past replete with consecrated association. Suddenly, and to him quite unexpectedly on this special occasion, the music of the organ again awoke. The player was a pupil of the organist, a highly sensitive, gifted being, who, seeking the same solitude with Dr. Garfoyle, gave to both their solitary souls one melodious volume of expression.

In the dim receding heights of vaulted roofs, magnified indefinitely by distance and obscurity, invisible pathways seemed to stretch out into the illimitable ; the echoes of choral song, the resonance of musical tones, the prayers of pure souls in all ages, mysteriously reanimated by the living voices of the present, mingled with the clouds and mists of fading day, till to Dr. Garfoyle's inner apprehension the whole cathedral became livingly, interiorly alive with spiritual emanations. Here, for him, as for the great master of Italian song, the whole material imagery became indwelt with spiritual significance, divinely symbolical in its details as in its entirety. Born in the clear avenues of spiritual sense these symbols took shape before him with startling spontaneity, seeming to obey in their production some law which eluded his intellectual grasp. Here his inner eyes had been opened and he had frequently experienced ecstasies of the spiritual sense such as no tongue could dare to tell. He had learned things which, since he knew he must have disbelieved them if they had been told him even by some angelic messenger, he never communicated to others ; things learned only by the testimony of an inner illumination, which extinguished doubt. With amaze of thought he found

himself lapped low in peace—a peace in which there was no questioning. Yet Victoria Goldenour proposed to teach this man the way to pleasure !

Nature, too, hung with lovely living pictures of herself the hidden presence chambers of his secret consciousness. Here he revived his early youth ; and at times he had been uplifted, so corporeally accompanying his thoughts as to have been physically renewed. He had beheld the everlasting hills dressed anew in all the colors that they wore to his unclouded vision as a child ; in green valleys, where streams of limpid water flowed by banks of odorous violets crowned with dew, he had been laid. He had heard the voices of fresh incoming tides, had breathed the elixir of pure morning airs. Here memories, sunk deeply in his mind, awoke, of vanished dawns and sunsets, of the wash and ripple of the waves that kissed his feet in childhood, of the scent of early blossoms, and the breaking of the buds in long past Mays. These restored impressions of vanished, yet perpetual springs, touched the nerves even of outer sense with thrills of unforgotten joys. With rapture he recognized that he stood indeed beneath uncovered heavens, companioned by the viewless spirits of the earth and skies ; and even while his bodily eyes beheld the torments of sin and of deformity, and his hands ministered to the lowest necessities of the sad scum of society, he had been fain to cry aloud, with inward triumph, "The earth is full of the glory of the Lord."

These visions, or vigils, left their trace indelibly imprinted on his delicate and all-embracing sensibility, till every word and thought and deed seemed to be quickened by them ; and from the mere touch of his hand, and the earnest glance of his eye, when he returned to a common life, there went forth a curiously benignant power to heal and bless.

No mystic this, active only in his dreams. It was through ways of death and of despair that the corroding sorrows of his soul had brought him to this luminous table-land, whereon he stood consciously, with one foot in the dust and mire of earth among the objects whom he served so indefatigably, the other planted on the threshold of eternity.

Indeed the measure in which he found himself at any time capable of putting forth divine force was conditioned by the fulness

of this inner vision. He realized that the moral states of those he came in contact with, and even the physical, through the interaction of sensitive nervous centres, were distinctly affected by his own spiritual condition ; and that one human being should thus seek to "sanctify himself" for the good of others with whom he was about to come into practical relationship, was a thought which abidingly and strongly governed his hidden mind.

For himself, Dr. Garfoyle demanded of the illumination which transiently visited him, not the shaping of thought into concrete or contracted dogma, but its conversion into active deeds of practical service for his fellows. Hence St. Amwell's Vicarage was, under his influence, the heart of the parish which surrounded it—a heart which beat incessantly in sympathy with the abject and the forlorn ; a heart ever ready to receive in its comforting embrace the human wreckage stranded by the faults of constitution or of circumstance, or by the failure of society to protect the weak. Mystical hypotheses Dr. Garfoyle accepted in so far only as they immediately ultimated in effective and beneficial representation, which should have a quantitative value for the bodies of men, equally with, and in the same region with, the facts of analytical science.

The young musician ceased playing, extinguished the lights by the organ, and quitted the building ; then Dr. Garfoyle too be-thought himself of the lateness of the hour, and followed him forth into the darkness. He had a private key of one of the lesser doors which opened toward the canons' houses. The buildings of the cathedral already loomed vast and misty in outline in the over-hanging gloom. The clouds were full of snow, and there was no moon. All nature seemed wrapped in sleep, and an absolute silence reigned around ; its dead pulsations might be heard and noted as contrasting with the resonant vibration of inner areas of space, where musical tones still lapsed and lingered, as though loath to die. So he passed out beneath the arches of the north transept door, the stone carvings of which were filled with foliage and flowers, with heads of saints and angels, grotesque and beautiful at once ; and as he held the door half open for the young organist, the musician felt it would have been so easy to discover there the type upon which the face that smiled upon him had been modelled.

Dr. Garfoyle closed the door behind them, crossed the court to his own house, and, groping his way up to the top of his door-steps, was blinded by the flood of light which issued from the lamps in his own hall. It was more brilliantly lighted up than usual, for he had a dinner-party, and the memory of this fact now fell upon his exalted mood with something of a shock of incongruity. Nevertheless, it was entirely a clerical party.

The room in which the canon entertained his guests was a stately apartment, the furniture all alike heavily carved and of massive oak. The large antiquated fire-place was still adorned with time-worn andirons and hooks of burnished brass; the sideboards and the corner couches were of the same date as the room itself. Everything here was rich, as the appointments of such a house might well be, and the arrangements the exact reverse of those which distinguished St. Amwell's Vicarage; yet the severity of Dr. Garfoyle's taste still manifested itself in the rejection of any modern ornament or article of luxury. The room was as he had taken it from his predecessors.

At the dinner-party on this February evening the dean faced Dr. Garfoyle, sitting at the foot of the handsome table. At the sides sat two of the vicars-choral of the cathedral, the senior curate from St. Amwell's, and the dean of Dr. Garfoyle's own college, these latter having come over on a visit. The dinner proceeded satisfactorily enough to the accompaniment of the usual clerical talk, which, though weighty and interesting to those whom it concerns, is apt to sound a trifle exaggerated in the ears of those who weigh its relative importance by the standard of some other measure, no matter what. Each profession is pardonably inclined to consider its own affairs those of the universe. To the soldier the world is apt to become a parade-ground, to the sailor the map measures little but sky and salt water, to the policeman it may be described as a "beat," to the dustman no doubt the earth is but a vast cinder-heap, while to these clerical gentlemen Cosmos was certainly contained in their church.

The big dean and the little one ventured to indulge themselves in a single glass of good wine; all the rest, including Dr. Garfoyle, were total abstainers. The period of dessert having been reached, the dean pushed back his heavy chair so as to be able to cross his

legs at a comfortable angle, and proceeded apologetically to remonstrate with his host on his special mode of meeting and attempting to grapple with the social problem.

“Such treatment as that which you bestow upon them, Garfoyle, fosters that sort of democratic and commercial spirit in the working classes which is the curse of our day. You teach the people to regard themselves as the pets of Providence, as well as of the political agitator. You serve them personally. I have even heard that for one inmate of your house no hand but your own was good enough to smooth the sheets. Now, candidly, do you not find them quite prepared to regard such services done to themselves as being handsomely remunerated by means of a sort of Celestial Post-office Savings-bank account? So much to Dr. Garfoyle’s credit entered into his book, to be ratified upon presentation to the recording angel; all accounts to be paid up in full on the Judgment-day! Not one of them,” concluded the clerical dignity warmly, “but would say, were he capable of phrasing the situation, that he had kindly consented to be used by Dr. Garfoyle as a means by which to better the canon’s chances in a kind of competitive examination for a good place up above, even possibly as a bid for a better berth down here. That is my experience of them!”

The young clergy rather enjoyed hearing the dean criticise the canon, even in a friendly spirit; the curate from St. Amwell’s particularly relished the situation, which—truth to tell—his own candid revelations had served to bring about. But Dr. Garfoyle smiled, as a man smiles the citadel of whose confidence is unshaken by arguments such as these.

“And I, Mr. Dean,” he said, “have observed a striking disposition in the minds of the rich to take into account the effects produced upon the minds of the poor, only when showing them sympathy and kindness. When you fetch them in out of the highways and hedges, you are in a great hurry to go round and see how your goodness has affected them, and if they feel it properly; but when you leave them in the ditch, you are not apt to trouble yourself about their mental processes. Pick up the pauper and treat him as a person, and you become answerable in the eyes of society for the effect upon his character of your conduct; neglect him, or rather treat him not as a person but as a problem, for whose solution

society and not yourself is answerable, and society will bear the burden of the moral consequences of your delay with equanimity. You are at least as much bound to consider the moral effects upon their characters of leaving them out in the cold, as of bringing them into the blaze."

The dean was about to retort when the subject suddenly received a practical and totally unexpected illustration. The door behind Dr. Garfoyle's back burst open, and in staggered a man whom the assembled company, with the exception of the curate, took for a drunken waiter. It was the moribund verger, William Birmingham. He was dressed in a greasy and crumpled suit of evening clothing, the same in which he used to go out waiting at Cambridge dinner-parties, while still verger at St. Amwell's. His public appearances having been confined to these festive occasions, he still reappeared at the hour he was used to, when thus making his final *début* upon the stage of life.

The moment that he entered the room he was seized with a paroxysm of coughing, and was at first unable to articulate a word. He clung to the back of a chair for support. His appearance was ghastly in the extreme, and the effect upon these men in normal health was startling. The kindly little college dean, moved by an emotion of pity, jumped up and tried to force him into his own seat; but the man resisted. He would not sit down, and as soon as he could speak, gasping and choking, he addressed the chair in the person of Dr. Garfoyle, in the style of a street orator:

"Sir, I have selected this evening to come and tell you, in the presence of these reverend gentlemen, of the superior clergy as represented by yourself, Mr. Dean, and by the cathedral clergy; and of the inferior clergy as represented by the curate of St. Amwell's"—the curate hid a quiet smile which played about his lips, and a thrill of suppressed criticism circulated like a magnetic current round the table—"I have come among you once again, to inform you that I, William Birmingham, have left the Church of England, and have joined the 'Independent Christian Thinkers.'"

"Well, Birmingham, I hope they'll do you good," said the curate, in a tone distinctly conveying a sense of the hitherto unspoken criticism.

“The minister of that community has been to visit me here by my special desire.”

“What, here? At the canon’s house in the close?” again interposed the irrepressible curate.

But Birmingham continued:

“He has shown me that the human soul demands liberty of thought, especially in the region of religion; that the human soul is the slave of no man, be he dean or canon, vicar choral or simple curate”—the said curate laughed right out this time, recognizing the ex-verger’s desire to punish him for sundry slights inflicted in St. Amwell’s vestry in former days upon his ever irritable self-love. “The human soul,” continued the speaker, “of a verger is the equal of the human soul of a dean, sir; nay, of a bishop, or even of an archbishop, sir, although I do not see one here ever likely to attain that dignity.”

Here the fearful coughing interrupted him. Dr. Garfoyle poured him out a glass of water; he drank it oratorically and continued:

“The Church of England was imposed upon me—I scorn the worldly pride which would bid me conceal it—ever since I was taken and baptized in the workhouse in the religion of the state, which gave me, an orphan child, the wretched food I ate, and the miserable clothes I wore. Gentlemen, I have seen through the Church, and it is hollow, rotten to the core. I have been in at one door, the low one; they converted me among them when I was twelve years old, at the same time they apprenticed me to an evangelical churchwarden that kept a barber’s shop. From that ’umble entrance, Mr. Dean, I advanced my position and my doctrine till under more aristocratic guidance I took the highroad and wore the robes of Ritualism. I have seen through it all. I have been behind all the scenes. I know the secrets of the vestry cupboards. I have learnt the dodges of the organ blowers and the sextons. I know which of the churchwardens pay in the offertory moneys to their own accounts and keep them there a quarter before they pass them on, thereby pocketing the interest of a quarter as a perpetual thing; I’ve noticed all the little ways of curates, the self-advertisement of the commercial sidesmen, and even the little cheating ways of scrubbers over soap and flannels that they do not use upon the chancel stones. I’ve listened to the choir boys chant-

ing with angelic faces, sitting in four surpliced rows, the words of the popular songs of the music-halls. I came into the church by a backdoor, and I know the mysteries of the backstairs of the establishment, sir. I shake off the dust of the 'sacred' pavements from my feet ! I quit the Church of England."

"Very well, Birmingham ; hadn't you better go back upstairs to bed ?" said Dr. Garfoyle equably.

The man became inarticulate from exhaustion and emotion. He was so evidently dying that the scene grew painful.

At that instant a telegram was put into Dr. Garfoyle's hand ; it dated from Nice, the answer was prepaid. "*Pye to Garfoyle,*" Dr. Garfoyle read, then he quitted the room in unconcealed agitation, leaving the dean master of the ceremonies.

The dean possessed an admirable manner, kindly, courteous, benign—every lineament of his fine countenance bespoke absolute certainty of himself, his position, his Church ; his power of dealing with every emergency which in the manifold experience of human souls might arise here or hereafter. His voice was beautiful.

"My friend," he said, approaching the unfortunate man, who still leaned gasping upon the back of a chair, "sit down and listen to me."

William Birmingham obeyed, because he had no choice.

"Do not deceive yourself any longer. You are indeed fast descending into the chambers of death. Do not trouble your mind any further about the trivial distinctions of creed or sect. You have been most generously nursed and cared for by my friend, Dr. Garfoyle ; he has loaded you with benefits to which you had no claim. Have you no other words to utter than these most unbecoming ones, in your last moments ? All your wishes will, I am very certain, be religiously respected by my friend the canon ; he has acted the part of a true benefactor to you in life ; if you wish it, I am equally certain that he will arrange that the last prayers which are said for you should be uttered by the independent minister whom you mention. I am very sure that I only express Dr. Garfoyle's wishes in saying that he shall be sent for immediately, and that you shall lie among the members of the sect you have chosen. Let no such cares trouble you in these supreme moments."

Birmingham leaned forward eagerly. His fingers clutched the arms of the chair in which he had sunk, convulsively; some new idea penetrated his brain with the dean's words, and it was one which moved him strongly, as being hitherto unconsidered.

"And have I trodden out the corn for deans and canons, to be muzzled when I seek a blade of grass, or a few husks, at the last?" he cried. "Why should any other church than that to which I have given my best services for all my years bear the charges of my illness? It is not likely that it would consent to do so. Its riches are not of this world. It is poor. It might even leave me to the tender mercies of the parish!" He began fighting and struggling for breath, indignant at his own impotence. His head fell backward over the chair. It was clearly a man *in extremis* whom the little company of clergy had before them. The younger among them sprang up, and carrying the chair in which he lay helplessly extended, placed him on a big couch at the end of the room.

"Recall Dr. Garfoyle," said the dean authoritatively to the servant who answered his summons, "and let someone go for a medical man at once."

"The homœopathic doctor, not the one Dr. Garfoyle has—not *his* friend," gasped the dying man, self-assertive to the last sad moments of his narrow life. And Dr. Garfoyle, returning, supported him in his arms, while the clergy with one accord gathered round, and the dean commenced reciting the prayers for the departing.

Once more with astounding energy the man silenced them.

"I did not think, I never believed that it would end like this. So soon! So soon! I am not forty years of age. Save me, sir! Save me, Dr. Garfoyle! You—it is to you I speak! You have great powers. I have heard men and women say a hundred times that you have saved their lives. A woman said once on her bed of death you had the gift of the apostles. I was angry then. I said she lied. Now I know she spoke the truth. You raised her up. Save me too. Give me life. Do you bear malice because I said I'd joined another church? Am I no longer worth your pains? Hear, I revoke it all! You saved that boy Bruce Goldenour! Oh,

yes ; I heard the tale. You loved the mother, so you saved the child. Is it thus you use the Lord's gift, denying it to his faithful servants, and wasting it on a strange woman ? ”

His voice rose almost to a scream. Dr. Garfoyle put him from his arms, but knelt down by his side.

“ You let Budge die,” he continued, almost incoherently. “ Ah, you were right there ; he was not fit to live. But I am a man of worth and character, who has paid his way and done his duty by the Church, and served you well, though never treated with the confidence I deserved. Surely you will not let me die ? a valuable life like mine wasted ! What was that foolish child's to mine ! ” and he seized Dr. Garfoyle round the neck with a grasp which nearly throttled him.

In truth, as soon as Dr. Garfoyle had re-entered the room, even the very presence-chamber of death had seemed richer and fuller of life than before. His manner might indeed lack something of the ease and dignity of the dean's, but then the dean's personality was an ever-present quantity ; Dr. Garfoyle's own individuality was held in utter abeyance. He became, at such crises as this, a mere instrument, a mirror of that inward and beatific vision which it had been permitted to himself to behold. By the glowing memories of that which he had heard and seen, he appeared among these sordid scenes of human weakness as a man inspired. He uplifted others, such as this poor sufferer, by the unworded sense which his presence awakened in them of the immanence of the Divine and the Unseen. Blurred and distorted indeed were the images of the divine ray which penetrated to the clouded conceptions of the dying man ; yet his fading eyes lit up with a gleam of unearthly brilliancy, inspired by a larger hope, even while Dr. Garfoyle uttered the syllables which announced his temporal and immediate doom. A thrill of indefinable awe and admiration swayed his nerveless frame, and soothed by the influence of his true friend's presence, though unable any longer to hear his words, the dying man sank upon his benefactor's breast.

“ He is gone,” said the dean, opening his prayer-book ; but no, Dr. Garfoyle remained motionless, supporting the still form. The purport of certain words which had been uttered had so deeply penetrated the mists which already enshrouded the man's brain

that their final effect was almost miraculous. Once more he reared himself up and spoke :

“I charge you bury me near the cathedral, in the consecrated ground. If that is all, I die a churchman. Listen to me, every one of you, and bear witness. I say I’ll die a churchman, lest among you you should cast me out ! Dr. Garfoyle, you are an honest man; I charge you hear me. I’ll have respect in death as I have had in life. Give me a good funeral. I’ve earned it of the Church; flowers, followers, cathedral choir, clergy, surplices, the dean. Bring my cassock—cover me with it.”

Thus the intrusion of an irrepressible and plebeian personality at the dinner-party was withdrawn. William Birmingham never spoke again. The dean finished reading the prayers over the dead body of the man who was their “brother” now for the first time. By one man of that little company he had been treated as a “brother” even while in life.

CHAPTER XI

A LIGHT-SOULED WOMAN

THE telegram which Dr. Garfoyle had received was urgent:

“Come at once. Serious trouble here. Wire to Pye.”

Pye was very prominent in it, so Dr. Garfoyle feared Victoria herself must be unable to act personally. The three months’ absence from her society which he had prescribed as a period of probation would be up on the 1st of March. On that day he had proposed to set out for Nice. This was the 11th of February, Birmingham’s funeral was fixed for the 14th; unless urgently necessary, Dr. Garfoyle could scarcely start until the evening of that day. He replied to that effect to Pye, and received no further communication.

He awaited the meaning of the summons with an inward anxiety and unrest such as he had not known for years. When first Victoria left England she wrote to him pretty constantly. He had received several merry letters from Paris, where she seemed greatly

to have enjoyed herself. Pleasures seemed to surround her like happy insects on a summer's noontide, and she seemed to sport with them as gayly and innocently as a child chasing butterflies. True, his imagination often refused to follow her in the scenes she described half playfully, half daringly, but his sympathy was with her as genuinely in her amusements as in her anxieties ; but just as an indulgent parent, having given his child permission to go to a dance, returns to his study and closes his door, so Dr. Garfoyle felt that Victoria had for the time being passed beyond his active participation in her lively pursuits.

Sometimes she told him of new toilets, sometimes of new plays which she had seen, sometimes of entertainments at which she had assisted, or of people—principally, it must be confessed, men—to whom she had been introduced, and always he had received her letters with the same kindly indulgence, and the same generous allowance for their frivolous tone. Every letter that he received was full of the charm of her delicious individuality. It did not matter what she said, it did not matter what she wrote, she was so full of life and vitality. She was so brilliant, so bewitching that Dr. Garfoyle only marvelled afresh at each letter he received, that she should really, in the midst of all her enjoyment, take the trouble to remember him at all.

His letters to her in reply were mainly eloquent where they treated of Bruce. That withholding of the expression of feeling which he had laid upon his conscience where she was concerned, was not operative when the child was in view. The windows which lighted up the chambers of his soul had, for a quarter of a century, been illuminated by a "light which never shone on sea or land," but the common earthly windows which looked on gardens where little children played and loved forms walked midst trees and flowers, had been closely shuttered from the living day ; now he stood waiting, not daring to admit the common lovely sunshine, not venturing to bid it touch the dusty walls, and show him all the objects by which he was surrounded, glorified by its long absent rays.

He had determined to leave the mother free, and he loyally observed his promise. Expressions of his love for her he sternly denied himself ; but his letters vibrated with a yearning passionate

tenderness for the child, the stronger since passion only in that guise found admission there.

So two months had passed away; but in the third a silence fell upon Victoria. Her letters grew brief, were divided by longer spaces, then ceased entirely. And when he received the Pye telegram Dr. Garfoyle had had no tidings for a month. During that period he had watched and waited like a schoolboy in his first term for the holidays, inwardly pining as a lover to rejoin his mistress. He continued to write although he got no answers, and in each letter he informed Victoria of his intention of coming out to Nice, as had been agreed upon, by the 1st of March.

In a long dream Dr. Garfoyle read "P. L. M." (Paris, Lyon, Marseilles) on the borders of the cushions of the carriage, as he was borne southward through the day and through the night. He spoke to no one; he scarcely dozed; indeed he doubted greatly if he ever slept at all; always before his short-sighted eyes, up and down, backward and forward, moved those dingy letters on a dull brown ground, like the monotonous phantasmagoria of a never ending dream. In after years, whenever the memory of those long hours of dumb suspense touched him, always those tiresome letters rose with wearisome iteration before him, stamped upon the land, the sea, the sky, "P. L. M."

Like everybody else he arrived at last, left his luggage at the station, and taking the inevitable bag in his hand, he commenced the ascent of the long, steep hill, at the top of which stood the hotel to which he had been in the habit of addressing his faithful letters to Victoria. He was as dusty, weary, and travel-stained as is the customary Englishman on his arrival. He had forgotten his personal appearance for the matters on his mind. Since he left his cathedral town he had made no toilet, and his clerical attire lent no kindly aid in disguising the disorder of the journey; wherever it was white it should by rights have been black, and *vice versa*; moreover he was very hungry, having neglected to look out for himself in this respect. These circumstances first appeared to him just before he gained the brow of the hill, before he reached the hotel at which he meant to put up. He found himself obliged to pass by the flowering garden hedge of a beautiful villa domain, wherein sat a gay company of ladies and gentlemen at their after-

noon coffee. They were sitting beneath a glass portico, sheltered from the wind, which was crisply cold, and they shared their sunny retreat with many lovely flowering plants. Camellias in pots stood ranged around them ; dwarf roses and carnations already blossomed in the borders at their feet ; anemones shone among them as on an English day in June.

Dr. Garfoyle, suddenly awakening to enjoyment of the freshness of the scene, grew sensible of the incongruity of his own personal appearance ; moved thereto by the fact that the attention of one of the group of laughing ladies seemed to be fixed upon him. At the same instant, before he had time to return the scrutiny, which he might easily have done, for he had taken the precaution to put his glasses on, here where all was strange to him, he heard a young shop-girl, sitting on a roadside bench with her lover, remark upon the distinguished company in the garden. "*Voilà le vrai cachet du beau-monde.*" She spoke in simple good faith, but the man's answer was curt and uncompromising. "*Chut ! C'est plutôt le vrai cachet du diable.*"

One of the radiant figures was sitting just outside the shelter of the glass dome beneath the dropping corals of a pink pepper-tree ; this figure now bent forward as Dr. Garfoyle advanced on the other side of the low flowering bushes which lined the garden paling, and that indefinable feeling which announces the recognition of one we know informed Dr. Garfoyle that she whom he had come to seek was gazing at him with intent interest and most genuine surprise. He in his turn was arrested by the same recognition.

Victoria looked more beautiful than ever in the clear light, which brought so crucial a test to complexions less unimpeachable than her own. Her dress was of some white woollen material, and in her lap lay pink tulips, matching in hue the parasol which was being carefully held over her by a gentleman of the company, who in his right of office-bearer leaned upon her chair. Dr. Garfoyle's thoughts were so full of her that it startled him to see her bodily represented before him. He stood still for a moment, startled and irresolute. Her countenance also expressed genuine surprise and hesitation. Had she not expected him ? What, then, was the meaning of the telegram ?

The next instant Victoria had apparently taken her cue. She deliberately leaned back again in the garden lounge, extended her little dainty-toed shoes in a nonchalant manner, tossed her head with a pretty, impertinent gesture, and did not know Dr. Garfoyle ; had, in fact, never seen him before ! She further directed her companion, a handsome, dark man of young middle age, to hold the pink parasol at such an angle as would prevent her catching another glimpse of the dusty, travel-stained figure pausing on the wrong side of the garden hedge.

"That old parson's looking up his flock for next Sunday, I suppose; estimating our probable pecuniary value as hearers, I suppose," said Victoria's companion, loud enough to be overheard by Dr. Garfoyle.

The tree under which this gentleman sat was a mimosa, and the tiny yellow sugar plums of its abundant blossoms mingled delightfully with the pink tassels of the pepper-tree. There were three or four other young men and women in the same company, and one of the latter now joined in the conversation.

"Let us hope," she said, "that he has lost his voice, and has been sent out here by a grateful congregation to look for it."

"And that he will not find it so long as we are here," added a young man ; whereat they all laughed, and Victoria joined in the laughter.

But by this time, although the sense of their words did not reach his ears, Dr. Garfoyle had become aware that he was a mark for their shafts of folly. He also realized with a bitter pang that Victoria Goldenour did not choose to recognize him in her present company. And reproving himself for having been inopportune in the attention which he had bestowed upon the said company in passing by, he hurried on.

At any rate she was well, and he was thankful; nor could there be much amiss with Bruce, since his mother was so mirthful. For what reason then had he been sent for ?

At the hotel, when he had engaged a room, he enquired for Mrs. Goldenour, and was informed that she had left the house and was now renting an adjacent villa for the rest of the season.

Dr. Garfoyle was greatly annoyed with himself rather than with Victoria. He had had no intention of presenting himself

before her until he had done away with all the evidences of fatigue and travel. In his rather old-fashioned courtesy he would have thought it failing in the respect due to any woman, and most of all to her. He had many habits of concealed but extreme fastidiousness in the matter of personal refinement and custom in dress and conduct. No modern don was Dr. Garfoyle, who could live upon a hand-bag for a week, and travel to the south of Europe with a pocket-comb. Quite other were the traditions of the men of his race to which he loyally adhered. So he forgot Victoria's share in the scene in which he had taken so unfortunate a part, and remembered only his own involuntary offence.

Very different was his aspect when, at about eight o'clock on that same evening, he issued forth from the portals of his hotel to pay his respects at the villa. But just as he reached the doorway he was stopped by Mrs. Pye, who was evidently come in search of him.

"Can I speak with you, sir?" she asked, flushing with self-importance.

"I am about to call on Mrs. Goldenour herself," returned Dr. Garfoyle coldly.

"She doesn't even know you are come, sir. I sent the telegram. I did it for the best. She is in debt, sir, sunk in debts and difficulties. She leaves me all her bills to pay, and I can't keep the hotel people off her any longer. And that is not the worst of all: it is her society, which has the fastest reputation in the place. I know because his valet—Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby's, I mean—is always with my cousin's son, who——"

"Mrs. Pye," said Dr. Garfoyle in a voice which shook her nerves, "return to your duties, or leave me here alone."

"And what are my duties," asked Mrs. Pye indignantly, "if not to protect Mrs. Goldenour's interests? I have acted for the best if I did send for you unknown to her. I have been a district visitor and a Sunday-school teacher, and have always lived in pious families until now."

"I should really be obliged, Mrs. Pye, if you would leave me," said Dr. Garfoyle deliberately, taking his stand before a big blue glass ball on a pedestal in the hotel garden, which reflected pictures of himself and Mrs. Pye upside down and arranged at all sorts of

ridiculous angles. His annoyance at the situation was extreme. This indeed accounted for Victoria's refusal to acknowledge his presence. Well might she have felt surprise that he should deliberately intrude upon her before the time allotted by himself was up. This backstairs business was repugnant to every fibre of his taste. To have been brought by a message from the maid. He clearly ought to have communicated with Victoria herself before hastening out; but he had been entirely possessed by the idea that she had dictated the telegram, and that some misfortune had befallen her. No wonder that his appearance had been unexpected and unwelcome to her.

The pace at which he walked, while thinking out these matters, enabled him easily to distance the intolerable Pye. She was out of sight when he reached the door of the villa, which stood open, revealing most of the interior of the house. A hall lined with orange-trees in pots, and fronted by camellias; at his right hand, in the garden, the water plashed in the basin of a fountain surrounded by flowering plants, while below ran the terraced walk skirting the road whence he had caught sight of Victoria and her company. All lay before him trembling and dreamlike in the hazy light of a half-risen moon. There was no sign of life about the house. There were apparently four rooms on the ground-floor; flowers and vases and curtains filled every vacant niche; but his attention was particularly struck by several rows of pale pink glasses hung just inside the portico, in which faint, rosy drops of light twinkled. "Fairy lamps" he remembered to have heard them called. He hesitated, looking for a bell, and found none; either there was none to find, or it was overgrown with shrubs and leaves; how summon anyone to let him in? Here, on the threshold of this fanciful abode, he suddenly felt old and worn and cold, standing unheeded, uninvited, and unwelcomed on the doorstep. Some Romeo should be here to woo the Juliet of this dainty, sweet abode. What had he, the Canon of St. Ives, fresh from burying William Birmingham beneath the snow of a prosaic English cemetery, to do in such a nest as this?

But, while he paused, the scene received the living sanction that it needed. Down the stairway came a childish figure robed in white, its bare feet treading the carpeted steps with eager haste,

the waving hair tossed back from the lovely brow, the delicate lips apart with excited joy; love shining in the sweet eyes, which gleamed like stars—and the whole welcoming figure of the boy, Bruce, leaped into his outstretched arms.

“Dr. Garfoyle! Dr. Garfoyle! I got out of bed, and I was looking over the stairs for my nurse, Pye; she must have gone out, and I saw you. Is it really you? It is too good to be quite true. When did you get here? Oh, mother, mother!” he cried, springing out of Dr. Garfoyle’s arms, “see, here is our friend come!” and, taking Dr. Garfoyle’s hand, he pulled him into the room, and the visitor was aware that Victoria rose up from her couch to receive him, thus introduced by her little son, whose bare legs and pretty baby feet rested lightly on the soft carpet. An exquisitely pure draught of life refreshed his lips as the child kissed them. “Get up, darling mother, and tell him just how glad we are. He is the best of all the friends and the goodest and the cleanest, and the handsomest,” he added, with a child’s irrelevant use of adjectives, stroking Dr. Garfoyle’s irreproachable clerical clothing as he spoke.

As for Dr. Garfoyle, his heart responded more immediately to the child’s claims of affection than to the appeal of any woman living, not excepting the one before him; who, as though out of sheer contradiction, now rose and came toward him as he stood in the doorway, holding the child by the hand.

“And have you nothing to say to me? Are all your thoughts for Bruce?”

Nothing! when she had just tacitly ignored their acquaintance.

“Now, Bruce,” she continued, “go back to your bed. Why are you here? And you have nothing on!”

Bruce looked down at his little white toes peeping from beneath the short night-shirt with a divinely innocent air. “It’s as long as a surplice,” he pleaded in self-defence, “and Dr. Garfoyle is accustomed to them.” And Dr. Garfoyle, picking up a silken rug from the sofa on which Victoria had been lying, wrapped it round the boy and took him on his knee, while he sank into a chair beside the mother and gazed upon her lovely face, drinking in the beauty for which his parched soul had been thirsting during all the weeks of absence. The child’s presence delivered them from the necessity

of explanations; and they were both glad to postpone the inevitable moment.

The little white feet sank deeply into the soft depths of the coverlet, and Dr. Garfoyle caressed them with his hand.

"He will not catch cold," his mother said, "thanks to these lovely carpets, all the product of a tiny hand loom, made in little squares. There's not another villa on the coast where a like luxury could be found." The rooms and the furniture were such a nice safe subject to discuss before the boy. The shaded light of the dim drawing-room threw up into relief the creamy whiteness of Victoria's dress, making variegated reflections on its undulating folds, from the interwoven colors of the silken covering which enwrapped the child, whose fair head lay pillowed on his friend's breast. In less than a quarter of an hour Bruce slept; and they both gazed at him in silence, fearful of awakening him, willing to delay the utterance of words which should break the spell that bound them in one common love of him.

Presently Victoria gently whispered: "Come," and beckoning Dr. Garfoyle to follow, led the way up the easy stairway.

He bore the sleeping boy tenderly in his strong arms and laid him down upon his little bed in his mother's room. A pervading effluence from her sweet presence almost overpowered him as, leaning over the child, she carefully arranged the coverings, and just swept with her lips the little hand that lay upon the pillow; then they both left him and descended the stairs. The slight and trivial action in which they had been thus associated seemed weighted with the force of years of intimate knowledge. Had they any longer the power to resist the child's unconscious influence? to rend the bonds his innocent hands had woven around them? Had not the wonderful intuition of the boy's love lifted them at once above all reasoned opposition of their own wills, or dictation of adverse circumstances?

The whole house was still. They passed again into the scented, shaded room. A bright wood fire had been replenished on the hearth, and the rose-colored blinds had been lowered. Dr. Garfoyle, with the inveterate habit of an Englishman, sat down in an armchair by the blazing logs, facing Victoria; but no longer close to her, as when the child had sat between them. Now the explana-

tion grew pressing and inevitable ; Victoria faced it. Piling up the cushions beneath her head, she picked up a pale pink fan, a thing of fragile and artistic workmanship, and holding it up in a half shy attitude she asked :

“Why are you here, Dr. Garfoyle ? Did you not get my letter bidding you not to come ?”

But before he could interpret the meaning of her unexpected words, footsteps were heard upon the garden path ascending the tier of terraces. Victoria darted up and rang a hand-bell by her side.

“Pye,” she said in an eager, hushed voice as that person appeared, “put out the colored lights in the entrance immediately, and shut up the house-door. Quick !”

But Pye had no mind to oblige her.

“It is too late, Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby is already in the hall,” she replied in a resounding whisper.

Then bowing and smiling with the confident air of a fashionable gentleman, and of one moreover so sure of himself as to be absolutely unable to doubt his reception, entered the same individual whom Dr. Garfoyle had already seen leaning over Victoria’s chair that afternoon, and shading her fair face from the sun and wind. Victoria performed the ceremony of introduction, and added to the mention of Dr. Garfoyle’s name the significant intimation that he had only arrived quite unexpectedly that very afternoon, and that he was “a very old friend.”

The other man, with a decidedly supercilious air, intimated that he misapplied the qualifying term “very old.” It was impertinent : so was the glance which accompanied the words.

“As I have not just arrived from England, and as I cannot hope to be favored by Mrs. Goldenour with the title of ‘a very old friend,’ I am content to wait her leisure.” So saying he sank indolently into the chair just vacated by the other visitor.

This was evidently a denizen of that world which the Nician shop-girl had spoken of. He was a well-made, irreproachably attired, dark-haired, sallow-complexioned personage, with prominent features and penetrating eyes ; and he displayed that unshaken self-esteem which gives solidarity to a certain section of society, and leads it to treat all outsiders as rejected samples of humanity.

Nor was he careful to conceal his contempt for an elderly English parson, whose inopportune presence spoiled his evening with the woman whom he condescended to honor with his approval.

Dr. Garfoyle was not the man to ignore recognized conventions in any society in which he might find himself. He immediately advanced toward Mrs. Goldenour with intent to take his leave ; but she deliberately, rising also, addressed her black-haired friend in careless tones :

“Since you are good enough to offer to wait my time, Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, you will excuse me if I take you at your word. Perhaps,” she added, playfully tossing him the pink feather fan, “you would like meanwhile to fan yourself or the fire, according to your temperament or your taste. At Nice, as we all know, both climate and choice do vary unaccountably.”

“Thanks, I’ll do both,” said the gentleman thus addressed, as with the fan in his left hand he cautiously thrust a blazing log back into the flames.

So they left him, sedulously reducing the wood to a white ash by the aid of Victoria’s pink fan—his own gift as it chanced.

Victoria no longer observed her rule about colorless flowers as best befitting her widowed condition—so Dr. Garfoyle noted ; her white draperies were liberally relieved by ribbons, fans, or blossoms of every dainty hue. She snatched up a pale pink wrap and twined it round her lovely head and neck, while they passed out together into the porch, which was a sort of impromptu conservatory, and she leaned against the glass doorway in the rosy light of the illuminating lamps. Hat in hand, Dr. Garfoyle stood below her upon the doorsteps.

“Tell me quickly,” she said, “did you not get my letter—my letter of the 12th—telling you not to come ? Or is your unexpected advent the mistaken result of its reception ?”

“Surely,” said Dr. Garfoyle, “I came in accordance with the telegram which reached me on the 11th. It was sent by Mrs. Pye ; but it contained an urgent summons, as I naturally supposed, from you. I had not heard from you for a month ; I was in great anxiety on that account. The letter that you allude to can only have arrived later on the very day I left. Do you not remember that the message spoke of ‘serious trouble’ here, urging me to come at

once? Well, here I am, I fear most inopportunately. Let me hasten to assure you I had no intention of intruding myself upon you before the time agreed upon was up."

"And vastly impertinent it was of Pye," said Victoria, flushing. "Positively I knew nothing of her proceedings; and I was angry when I saw you from the terrace walk this afternoon. I hoped to punish you by my outrageous rudeness. I concluded you had disobeyed me. I had told you not to come at all; not to count on me for anything but disappointment. I had written that you should not waste your time and thoughts on me, that I could never be your wife. And now it is so hard to tell you. I wish that you had had my letter. It is so hard to say to you—to say to you of all men, to whom I owe so much. Pity me, do!"

"I do pity you," he replied with rare unselfishness; "but was there any special reason for my rejection, other than that we know, and which I have had before me all along; that you were young and beautiful, and well might feel toward me rather as a daughter than as a wife?"

"Yes, the reason is in there," she said, speaking low, and pointing to the door of the room which was the temporary prison of Brabazon-Farnaby.

Then indeed Dr. Garfoyle felt himself rejected, and waves of prescient suffering surged up from heart to brain. Victoria saw the changed countenance, and added in eager self-exculpation:

"What a pity that you ever trusted me, or built any hopes upon me at all! Ah, I am 'a light-souled woman,' as Swinburne, or somebody like him, said of just such a woman as me. Not light-hearted. Ah, no! nor yet light in action, that is far too common and vulgar for me; but my soul is like a flake of thistle-down: blown by your breath it ascended toward heaven, by the breath of another it is caught and borne downward to the earth—no, not toward hell; I have not weight enough to sink so low. It is merely wafted along, just above the shining surface of the ground, entangled by each flower set in its pathway; the sport of every butterfly that meets it on the wing. Poor little, miserable, futile soul! too frivolous for heaven, too fastidious for hell; floating ever on the surface of the earth, ever at the height of birds or flowers. With you, at my best, I soared; with him at his best I sink to the level of quite

secondary uses, but it is the easiest flight, and I am tired. Good-by."

"Permit me to understand you, Mrs. Goldenour. Are you then engaged to Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby?"

"Not that I know of, but I probably should have been by now, if you had not appeared upon the scene. Now I shall take him at his word, and shall make him wait my will."

"Allow me rather to take my leave," said Dr. Garfoyle with dignity.

"Only on condition that you come and see me in the morning. I have something which you must give me another opportunity of saying to you under more favorable conditions than these."

Then she returned to the drawing-room, where the fire was successfully blazing, the fan irretrievably scorched, and Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby was with difficulty digesting his disgust at her inconsistencies.

Dr. Garfoyle took the road up the hill to his hotel. The wind had risen, and it swept past him in gusts, raising the fine white dust upon the road, and dispersing a bank of cloud which had hitherto hidden the moon, now shining out with a fitful silvery gleam from amid rent canopies of fleecy billows. Early as it was, the silence of night had already settled down upon the restless haunts of men, and only the barking of dogs, up here among the villas, awoke the echoes of darkness. Dr. Garfoyle ascended to his uninteresting room on the third floor, perused the notice on the door that he must ring once for the chamber-maid and so forth, and considered the warning that, *en cas de décès*, he would be fined a thousand francs; noted the pieces of furniture in the room—there were exactly five, plus two minute rugs, one cheap candle, and a horrid smell of gas—then became aware that he was horribly fatigued. He had been travelling day and night; he had forgotten to eat. His brain was feverishly active, his eyes burned, and refused to close beneath their dropped lids; his quivering pulses leaped with strange unwonted throbs of pain. Hydra-headed, the crushed emotions of long years rose up and confronted him in his exhaustion, as he stood paralyzed by fatigue and grief at the still unclosed window of his lonely room. Warned thus by physical exhaustion that he was too weak to brave the contest with his

awakening foes, he hastened out again, enquired the road to the nearest English chemist's, and there had a sleeping draught prepared for his immediate use.

This declining of present conflict, with all his nerves unstrung, though in itself a proof of his sound sense, smote his sensitive conscience like the commission of a common crime. He had drunk the cup that had been put to his lips, but he had drugged it. Nevertheless, he slept before he had made his peace with his inward monitor, praying dumbly that in sleep he might attain that state where was neither failure nor fruition of love's quest ; until at length, in the immortal growth of a passion purely divine, he might burst the cerements and grave-clothes of the flesh, and find himself at last one with the very life of love itself.

CHAPTER XII

IN A VILLA GARDEN

AFTER the agitation of the night before Dr. Garfoyle slept late. He had barely had time to recognize that he had not incurred the fine levied in this interesting hotel upon the estate of those who might have the misfortune to mistake one of its narrow beds for a coffin, when a note from Victoria Goldenour was brought up to him. In it she begged him to call upon her "at once," and he shortly obeyed the summons. He found her waiting for him at her garden gate, in her dress of soft gray material, with bands of mouselled chinchilla wandering up and down it. Her parasol was also gray, but rose-lined, and the sunny reflection touched her transparently clear skin with happy effect.

"Did I send for you too soon?" she said. "I wanted to forestall the worries of the day. With your consent we are going to make a little excursion together ; as yet we shall have the country all to ourselves. We will get into the first cabriolet that comes our way, then we will drive three miles out to a place I know, where there are real flowers, and a real view from a delicious spot I love among the hills. There you can surprise the spring at work, get above

the olive woods, and note the lovely coloring of the bay. I shall not take Bruce or you will attend to him, and this morning you are to be mine, all mine, just for once ; for the last time, you know ; you are to listen and I am to talk ; then I will hear you while you explain to me all those weighty matters which no doubt you have upon your mighty mind. ‘Facts,’ of course, you are sure to call them ; men’s things always are facts to them, though they are no more ‘facts’ in reality than are ours which we call ‘fancies.’ Indeed, I sometimes think myself that the truest truths are facts of the imagination only, though I don’t suppose I must ask you to agree in that sentiment !”

Dr. Garfoyle smiled, but waived the subject ; he wanted to look about him. Now first he realized that he had left the winter behind him in England ; everywhere he beheld budding leaves and opening blossoms. To eyes which had not been taught by custom or indifference to look coldly upon the vivid scenes of beauty which shone in this world-trodden corner of a lovely land, the prospect was delightful. The road by which their carriage ascended toward the hills was bordered with trees, now decking themselves anew with bright green crowns. The villa gardens were filled with flowering and sweetly scented shrubs and flowers. Here and there they skirted an orange grove, or a plantation of feathery white-stemmed palm-trees tied up for preservation for the coming festival in Rome ; and the intense brilliance of the sunshine reflected all these objects with fresher and more varied coloring than he ever remembered to have seen before.

When they reached the elevated spot on which the villa, pointed out by Victoria as their destination, stood, they were able to look down upon an unbroken expanse of the Mediterranean, far below them. The sea was one illuminated sheet of deep-blue water, varied here and there by white streaks of lighter hue, where some earthy rivulet contributed its doubtful stream to the purer waters. At the confluence of these streams white gulls dived and struggled for their prey, uttering plaintive cries which reached to distant ears ; while their white wings, bathed with spray, like living semaphores flashed signals in the brilliant sunshine.

“My Italian master grants me the *entrée* to this domain,” Victoria explained. “It is his, but it is empty, and he wanted me to take it.

As I told him I had not the means, he has graciously presented me with the key, entreating me to call it mine until events change. I welcome you ; pray make yourself at home."

They left their carriage halfway down the hill, and ascended on foot to the level of the villa garden. They passed along the gravel paths, noting the abundance and variety of the flowers which filled the air with exquisite perfume, while the shining foliage was still covered with glittering gems of dew. Then, by one consent, Victoria and her companion passed through a rustic gateway and found themselves in an enclosed space of ground left uncultivated by the proprietor, doubtless to be built upon at no very distant date. Here they exchanged the garden flowers for their sisters of the woods. Lilies grew at their feet, blue hyacinths hung their fragrant heads ; flowers of the narcissus spangled all the mossy floor. Here, too, was a thick belt of trees ; the cork-oak, the hazel, the palm willow, mingled at the edge of the enclosed ground with the groups of olives.

They stood together, in the heart of the wooded territory. Here the ground was stony and dry, and Victoria selected a rocky seat from which she could command an uninterrupted view over sea and land. The sunlight fell through the quivering branches of softly shading olive-trees, painting the grassy carpet at their feet with arabesques of dancing light ; in her lap lay the flowers he had gathered for her—just a loose sheaf of blue hyacinths, their long, blanched sheaths, thin leaves, and odorous bells resting in confusion upon her soft gray gown. No human being was apparently near them, but far off a donkey-boy drove his slow beast home toward Nice, laden with two living kids, their pitiful feet tied across its back. Happily Dr. Garfoyle was too short-sighted to see them, even with his glasses on, but Victoria noted them and sickened at the sight. And upward toward the mountain slowly toiled an Italian peasant in his picturesque dress, with a great bundle of desiccated reed-canes on his back, cut from the marshes near to Ventimiglia. Far below, to the right, lay the whole range of white terraces and houses which constituted the town of modern Nice, now basking in the early sunshine.

This was the view which Victoria had purposely brought Dr. Garfoyle there to see, but she allowed him only a few minutes in

which to enjoy it before she grew restless for speech—speech of some sort, relevant or irrelevant.

“Now,” she said, “I am going to talk to you about myself. I like talking about myself, but one has to be very interesting to dare to do it. I am of opinion that it would save trouble if everybody would kindly indicate to their friends the light in which they wish to be regarded. You see everyone quite naturally takes a different view of the same person. You are sure to be to yourself what you are to nobody else. This is truer in some cases than in others, and it is particularly true in mine ; for I am like a mirror. Ah ! yes, you know I am. The opal is my favorite stone. I made my husband give me opals for his wedding-gift ; afterward I heard they were unlucky, and so, alas ! I have found them, but the fact remains that what the opal is to other stones I am to other human beings. You, for instance, Dr. Garfoyle,—physician, canon, mystic, saint,—you see in me not Victoria Goldenour, not me, myself, as I was made or things have shaped me, but a poor, tiny reflection of yourself ; that little feminine image of your mind which I am capable of giving back to you ! It affects you ; why ? Because it is the complement of your own nature ; but it is not me. Now, don’t protest ; it is my turn to preach, yours to listen. Learn what it is to be compelled for once to hear. By all that is highest in me I am impelled to mirror *you* ; but driven by another set of instincts I mirror quite another kind of man ! For me the question stands thus—which representation is nearest to the truth of my own nature ; which impression therefore makes me happiest in responding to ?”

“Yes,” he said ; “your own highest happiness, that is the question.”

“There you are,” she said, laughing and yet very much in earnest, “that is just like you, assuming that to strive to attain to an ideal must be for my good. I doubt it. The effort in the long run, nay in the short trot, in my experience produces a reaction, resulting in a fall proportionally deep. By so much as I rise above my natural level on a Monday do I sink below it on a Tuesday. On Sunday I listen to your anthem in your cathedral, and I am yours in heart and soul ; but during the week John Pengelley drives me to the ‘Two Thousand,’ and I am his ; while at the

present season the Hon. Lionel Brabazon-Farnaby is to accompany me to Monte Carlo, and I am perfectly contented with the arrangement."

Dr. Garfoyle winced; this plainness of speech, even from her pretty lips, offended his cultivated taste.

"Yes, I see you do not like to hear me say these things," she exclaimed; "but bear with me just a little yet, my friend, for there is no offence in truth itself, and these things that I say are true. I have not had such an extensive education as might teach me how to phrase my meanings in your superior language; I can but show you in cheap vivid pictures that which I would have you understand. Now, shall I tell you what I see when I am with you? Listen! We are always in the glorious aisles of your magnificent cathedral; one long service is in perpetual progress, only the occupations of the congregation are not in the performance of conventional services only; but all their lives seem led within these walls, just as children bring their dinners or their dogs to foreign cathedrals. The reverberations of the organ are forever in my ears, the sounds of praise and the voice of intercession never cease when I am thus seeing eye to eye with you. It is beautiful and harmonious; it brings to me a sense of being disenthralled from time and sense, and of floating in diviner air. I am good, I am happy, and it is all spontaneous; there are no stated times nor seasons; there are no hymn-books, footstools, nor collections; no dressing-gowned vergers. (By the way, I never see William Birmingham there inspecting the vestry-cupboards.) There is an absolute deliverance from dead forms and out-worn creeds; but I could not bear it always, I should die if I stayed there. The atmosphere is all too rare for me; I faint from the overpowering influence of the captivated essence of adoration. I need to escape, to exercise quite contrary powers, to taste pleasures which never press in there."

Much moved, Dr. Garfoyle held up a protesting hand, but she eagerly resumed:

"Oh, yes, I know what you would say, that 'no pleasure as such is excluded'; for instance, I know that if I were your wife you would permit me, nay, even encourage me to go to all the plays and pastimes I might choose to frequent. I know how you would stand looking on, and with what heavenly joy your face would

shine at witnessing my pleasure in, let us say, whirling round and round in John Pengelley's arms, just as I should smile at Bruce's joy. I know that there would be in no hidden corner of your generous mind one thought of critical withdrawal, or one unsympathetic word upon your kindest lips. But for all this, you would have me take my play in a cathedral, friend ; for you dwell yourself in a spiritual shrine, in a temple of divine ideas ; nor is there any pastime or pursuit but you would bring there ; nay, must bring it there, before you could enjoy, or share it, just as there is no pain, not excepting this which I, alas ! am causing you, with which you will not wrestle prostrate on that pavement, when its agonies overtake you."

"All this," said Dr. Garfoyle briefly, "is but to say that life, whether consciously or unconsciously, must be lived out beneath the eye of the Eternal Giver ; the temple that you speak of is no narrower than the whole earth and no wider than the human heart."

"But I cannot consecrate all my life, and what is more I don't want to ; I want to escape, I want my own little play-place where I may hide from the Immensities," she said, lifting up her arms dramatically, and letting them fall again. "I claim a corner where I may be silly—not naughty, don't misunderstand me. No, you could not ; you are too good. I am not accusing myself of anything special. I am not hysterical, nor have I anything to confess ; but were I to lay bare my heart, it would be a penance at which you, rather than any other man under heaven, should assist. Your glance would heal and never hurt me ; but to be always breathing an incense-laden atmosphere, to be always treading holy ground, to you it is natural ; it is your chosen pathway, your common air ; whereas to me it would be to find myself in a back seat in heaven listening to angelic choirs when I had taken a ticket for a sofa-stall at the Casino, or at best when I would hear the thrushes and the blackbirds waken on some dewy morning in an English spring. The impetus of the recoil would project me downward far toward hell."

"You did not find out all this at first?" Dr. Garfoyle said ; and his voice, though very tender and low, had an accent of grief not wholly free from reproach.

"You do right to say that," she quickly answered. "I did feel

from the very first that the chosen paradise of your state, wherein you continually dwelt, was quite another one than mine. We all have our own heavens and our own hells, I have heard you say so yourself ; but in my great gratitude and love to you for saving my boy Bruce's life—yes, you did save him," she said in answer to a protesting movement on his part—"I thought I might take you by the hand and lead you out into that pretty little playground of mine, which you had closed your eyes unto, because it lay outside your special range in the doubtful world. I thought that I could bring you other pleasures: love you had forgotten; joys you had refused to know, in token of my gratitude."

"Well," he asked enquiringly, "and did I fail to make you feel how blessed I should be in learning of you? If so, it was because I did not dare to take you at your word, and weight your life with mine."

"Possibly," she said; "but what you showed me was that you would take the joys I brought you, and thank me for them too, oh, with so much love and gratitude, if——"

"Yes, pray go on ; 'if' what?" he said, and his voice trembled.

"If once for all I would bring them into your shrine, would consecrate them, symbolize them. See, dear, good, great friend, only as a sacrament in very deed, not in mere word as suffices the rest of the world, could you share in the joys I offered you, and I am withheld ! I am too slight a thing ; besides, I am too true. My nature is complete, all one. I am not vain, nor dull, but I am different from your thought of me."

"I think you transparently true; indeed I find you so, and in the truth of any character lies its consecration, even as in its unconscious obedience to the laws governing its growth from bulb to flower lies the perfection of the hyacinth's service."

"Ah ! but I am not a flower, but a reasonable human being," she said; "and the conscious, perfected development which you would demand of me lies beyond my powers."

"So all this is what you wrote to me in the letter which I never got, I suppose?" he asked.

"Oh, no; I could not write it," she said eagerly, "nor could I speak it saving to yourself—I am not sufficiently clever ; but I warned you not to come out here, and I told you that, before the

time agreed upon was up, I should probably be engaged to someone else. I gave that letter to Pye to post, and now I see it all. Pye is anxious, not about my soul, but about her own; she wishes to secure her own salvation. You who love me may entrust my soul with all its chances to its Maker; but Pye feels that her own celestial situation is at stake. She is anxious to decorate her golden crown with me; she thinks that I should shine quite nicely in it, just as one of my best diamond stars would grace her Sunday gown at a mothers'-meeting tea at St. Amwell's vicarage."

"But," he still objected, "you have co-operated with me of your own free will. And can I forget so soon the value of your gifts when so employed?"

"Oh, yes; I have nursed Budge for you, and I have kissed the paralytic, who took me for a sweetly scented angel, but after all I have something to confess to you"—and lifting up her face, which she had buried in the hyacinths, she said archly, "and I let John Pengelley kiss me directly afterward, when we were driving back together, to take away the taste of death. That is what I am like. He met me in the Newmarket Road and drove me back in his hansom, after we had been to the tile works. Such are the drawbacks of my attractions. I should not be good enough to kiss the paralytic, if I were not bad enough to let John Pengelley kiss me too. Not one of your thirty district visitors would have done either one thing or the other, and you know it perfectly well, Dr. Garfoyle." Then, with a little tired sigh, she added, "Not every day can I be climbing up a ladder of light, you standing on the topmost rung and reaching down a hand to me. Now, do you understand?"

But if he understood he remained still unconvinced.

"Why," he said almost impatiently, "will you persist in identifying yourself with your shadow? Have I ever seen any other woman capable of spending the long hours of a night of agony alone, when her own son lay dying, with the human outcast upon her bosom—an outcast so horrible as to be forsaken even by his own mother? Do you not know that in that hour, when I lifted you up and freed you from that fearful corpse, my heart fell down and worshipped the woman capable of such an action?"

"I did it for my own child's sake," she said.

"Had it been that motive alone which inspired you, you could not have done it," he replied ; and she was silent.

For a short time there was absolute stillness, unbroken save by the whisperings of the light breeze in the clump of neighboring palm-trees, the hum of insects, the cry of the distant gulls ; but the silence missed the musical quality given to it in an English spring by the joyous concert of woodland songsters. Dr. Garfoyle had been standing hitherto upon a raised bank covered with flowers, near to, but behind, the rocky seat which Victoria had appropriated. Hence she could not see his face, and to her eager apprehension the silence had seemed ages long, and his voice reached her ears when at length he spoke, as though it came from a remote distance to where she sat upon the grass, in the villa territory of modern Nice. His tones were measured, and sternly self-controlled ; but with a break in their compass which betrayed the cost of that self-mastery.

"You make playthings of your phrases, Mrs. Goldenour. Words are toys to you," he said ; "I do not find it possible to answer you in the same tone in which you speak to me. In all likelihood the day will never dawn in which it will be possible for me to tell you what my true feeling has been about you and your child. That is indeed a thing I would not have you comprehend. But, as regards the actualities of my position with regard to your own, in those I have never been deceived. You were filled with terror at your child's danger, you attributed his restoration to my efforts ; you confounded gratitude with love ; you expressed yourself more strongly than you really meant. Remember, I refused to take you at your word, unless in three months' time your attitude remained the same. What has happened is precisely what I anticipated. I had not at first, nor have I now, any disposition to attempt to bend your judgment or your inclination in the direction of my desires, so long as the truth of your own nature directs you in another way."

"I am so sorry," she said, putting out her hand like a child who seeks to be forgiven.

"I do not hold you even answerable," he said gently, taking the proffered hand and raising her up, "for my bitter share in your mistake. Your words were dictated by a grateful heart. You

meant me good, and not harm. What you have really done you could not know. But you play lightly with the deepest passion of men's hearts, Mrs. Goldenour, and make them instruments of discord or of harmony beneath your touch."

"Let me be a child if not a wife to you," she said impulsively, "for indeed I love you dearly."

"Your child indeed is as a child to me," he answered; "but, as for you, if I have lived twenty years longer than you have done, it is only that with truer heart, quicker brain, with warmer energies, and more entire self-surrender, I might say, I love you. You have bridged the chasm between my youth and age; and have converted the bitterness of early denial into the force of later longing."

Suddenly he ceased speaking, evidently by a tremendous effort of self-repression; so painfully did it affect Victoria that, shocked and frightened, she again tempted him to speak by her attitude and tone.

"Alas!" she said, and a quick change came over the vivid expression of her face, "and have I really been to you what Shadrach's wonderful voice was to me when the terrible being, Budge, lay dying in my arms—something so very much sweeter and better than I knew? Oh, poor, little, commonplace, miserable me! And has my voice really been to you, as Shadrach's was to me, full of things far above my knowing? What I was to you is just as little me, my very self, as Shadrach Trupper's voice was representative of himself. What you really want, Dr. Garfoyle, and what you will never find, is Shadrach's voice in Bruce's throat; but, when you meet with Bruce's beauty of nature, you will not find it accompanied by Shadrach's perfection of expression. Surely you must have met with many a district visitor with a far lovelier disposition than mine? but you have passed her by, because I look that which she is. But, after all," she added, turning away, "you will not mind much. You will console yourself because it is a duty, because you are a saint."

The man shuddered, and looked up in pathetic protest.

"Well," she added, half pettishly, half in eager self-exculpation, "how could I know this was to be the end of our friendship? Moreover, it is I all along who have taken the initiative. Remember, until now, you never spoke at all; you never committed yourself."

"You would have me find language in which to answer you? You would have me attempt to show you what this episode in our lives, to which you so lightly refer, is, and has been, to me? The feelings which you have awakened in me lie too deep for any representation save that which conveys the most absolute surrender possible of myself and of all that is mine to give. The love of you, Mrs. Goldenour, and of your boy, has become so intimate a portion of my life that you cannot take it from me, nor would I surrender it if I could. You wish me to speak to you of myself, Victoria; hitherto I have shrunk from doing so, but you have willed it, and it shall be. In me you have awaked the dead or rather that which, if not dead, had lain unconscious since my youth. You say that you like pictures in your talk, you have a partiality for illustrations; then look there: you see that sapling whose few sparse leaflets mingle with the downy catkins of the hazel just below, and reach upward to the red pyramids of the firs above—would the destruction of its promise, by the fury of storm or mistral, compare with the devastation similarly wrought upon the veteran branches of the oak-tree standing on the hill beyond? See how in its innumerable leaves, its massive boughs and myriad leaves, the sap is stirring; as the frost checking the promise of that sapling, was the bitter loss of my early manhood, compared with this, the utter devastation of my years."

"But I am young. I did not understand," she murmured.

"You have possessed yourself of my past, you fill my present, and I cannot conceive of any future apart from the thought of you and of your boy. My whole being enfolds you both in an embrace which death itself cannot dissolve, since such love is immortal. Do you know the motto of my family, Mrs. Goldenour? No? Well, it is this: *Amor sub pondere crescit*, and beneath the load of half a century of years, the burden of a weighted spirit and the denials of my earlier manhood, my love for you has grown into a blessed, vital unity; and I choose to assert it when I say I love you! With my body I adore you, with my soul I seek communion with yours, with my spirit I refer the consecration of my love to its divine source! You have willed that I should speak, and I have done so."

"I hope it makes you feel better," she said, pulling the hyacinths

to pieces, "it often does me ; but look ! Who is that coming up the hill ? There's an end of our solitude. Why, it's my Italian master, the owner of the villa. He must have followed us out here. I rather wish he'd stayed at home ; these mental gymnastics are fatiguing. We must go and meet him. He appears to be getting out the villa furniture, and seems bent on hospitality."

The Italian advanced, civil, mellifluous, loquacious, honored by this lovely lady's approval of his property ; respectful to the dignified ecclesiastic who accompanied her. He had, indeed, spread a table with his own hands on the terrace, and now invited their attention to the wine of his country, his native oranges, his very own figs, and his confectioner's cakes. Further it seemed that with an eye to business he saw in Dr. Garfoyle a possible tenant for the unlet villa, and, the repast concluded, the advantages of the dwelling-place were submitted for their consideration. He had dismissed his own carriage at the foot of the hill ; Victoria had therefore no choice but to offer him a seat in hers, and the Italian's delight at the success of this innocent scheme received the last touch needed to its perfection by Dr. Garfoyle's declining the third seat for his share, and begging to be allowed to remain somewhat longer in the garden. With scrupulous and elaborate courtesy the owner handed him the key, and Dr. Garfoyle turned away just as the Italian, addressing Mrs. Goldenour in the delicately phrased and complimentary style characteristic of the language he professed, handed her a letter which he said he had received from the hands of her boy's *gouvernante* when he called to enquire for her that morning. The *gouvernante* had, he said, represented it to be "an important letter from England," and nothing but the gracious quality of Mrs. Goldenour's reception of his poor attention could have made him retain it in his possession so long.

Victoria read her letter, and five minutes later she was back again in the olive wood. The hyacinths which had lain in her lap were now crushed beneath her feet. Her eyes were full of trouble. Like some hunted, wild thing was her attitude. Her whole bearing was one of defeat, and bespoke some new and terrible cause for fear.

"Dr. Garfoyle, Dr. Garfoyle !" she called. "Come to me !

Come quick ! The Italian is waiting down below with the carriage, and I cannot keep him long. Make haste, please, and read that. Oh, my friend, my friend, do let me take back all I said. Do not remember the foolish things I've uttered. You love the boy and me—take us quite away. Take care of us safely. You can easily pay my bills, I insult you if I mention them. Five hundred pounds will clear us here. Take us away. His father's family cannot deprive me of the boy if I am married to such a man as you ! See, read Sir Peregrine Goldenour's precious production, then you will understand——”

Dr. Garfoyle silently read the letter so excitedly thrust upon him. It was indeed a sufficiently unpleasant production ; the writer of it informed his sister-in-law that he had heard with entire disapproval of her proceedings at Nice, and that having regard to the fact that he was Bruce's guardian, and that the marriage which—he was informed—she contemplated making would place the boy in the hands of a totally unsuitable step-father, he had come to the decision, toward which his own and his wife's counsels had long been tending, to remove Bruce altogether from her care and control, and to place him at school with their own younger boys. As Bruce was now over seven years of age, Sir Peregrine kindly reminded his sister-in-law that her rights unsupported by any special provision of her late husband's will had already expired, and he added that she might expect him to appear personally on any day and to take the boy back to England with him. He felt sure that she would be sorry to hear that he had had an attack of bronchitis, for which a fortnight's stay in the finer climate of Italy might well prove beneficial.

Victoria only wished that the attack had carried him off !

“They care nothing for my boy,” she explained to her friend ; “they have five of their own, and the capacities of their narrow hearts are strained to the uttermost to accommodate them. They would never have dreamed of taking Bruce away from me had not my grandfather, Sir Victor Bruce, left him his heir. It is nothing but pompousness and plagueyness on Peregrine's part ; while, as to her, she is one of those ineffectual women who never do get a chance of redeeming the record of their own insipidity except by interfering in other people's lives.”

"Forgive the question, Mrs. Goldenour, but had you any thought of paying your debts by marrying Mr. Farnaby?"

"Well, certainly cash is convenient," she said, "but I'd rather have it without marrying anyone—at any rate, in a hurry."

"To make your decision you must be in a freer position," he said. "What is money when you have such power over my life? I cannot enter into your present scheme so far as it concerns our mutual relations; you will yourself be the first to feel it, immediately, after all that you had previously said to me; but the money that you require I shall be able to place in your hands by the day after to-morrow."

He hastened to forestall her objections by telling her that the sum was but part of a fund he employed; if she did not use it someone else would. He reminded her that he was the only man from whom she could safely borrow without thought of equivalent return.

"In short, it's charity, and I am 'an object,'" she said, smiling at the peculiarity of her position, even through her tears.

"One of the Guild of Widows," he replied, smiling also.

"But may I not go and have a little private gamble and be indebted to nobody?" she said. "Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby was going to drive me to Monte Carlo; but now I shall not dare to go. I will not leave my boy. No one can say when Peregrine may come, and Pye is clearly a traitor in the camp. She failed to find an ally in you; she has sought one in Sir Peregrine Goldenour; all this is doubtless due to her! This is the way the meek rule the earth!"

Victoria looked up into her friend's expressive countenance, now eloquent with strong feeling, with the pathetic pleading of a sweet and childlike soul. She placed her little hands in his, and had he willed it so, the power of his rich, strong nature over her impulsive spirit would have been enough to bring her to his arms. So vivid was the magnetic attraction of his divinely energized nature that he had in that instant but to take the gift of her surrendered life as a promise made to his; but with clear-eyed comprehension of their mutual relations, he well knew that Victoria's love, so impulsively given, would be equally quickly withdrawn; and he had sternly determined that unless she turned to him in absence, taking

step by step in solitude alone, of her own pure volition, the path which should unite them, he would never voluntarily use the conscious power, which he felt within his reach, to influence her.

Victoria took involuntary Italian lessons in linguistic floriculture all the way home. She chattered and laughed, glad of the relief from tension of feeling, and yet Dr. Garfoyle's love had now really touched her for the first time. Her dominant thought hitherto had been—how good and pretty and grateful she was to him; and how easily he would draw consolation from saintly sources if she gave him up; and this persuasion gave her a pleasant sense of freedom in her treatment of him. She had played with the thought of making him blessed, of proving to the saint the value of the sinner, when she holds in her pretty hands the recompense of the emotions. There had even been a sort of underlying contempt in it all—the contempt of a pretty woman who knows her own value for an elderly man whom she suspects of not knowing it. Perhaps she had never really quite meant anything she had said to him. But now, she would not dare to trifle with him any longer. Hitherto she had refused to see anything in him but the priest; now at length she had come face to face with the man, and henceforth could never ignore him.

Then, too, she was really glad that she was to have the money. Now, she need not marry the Hon. Lionel Brabazon-Farnaby a day sooner than she liked, nor indeed at all, unless she really did like. Now, she need not take his horrid advice, and go with him to try her luck at Monte Carlo, or accept his introduction to one of those objectionable gambling clubs where ladies are admitted on the introduction of such fashionable gentlemen. She had truly shrunk from it all, and yet, without this aid, how was she to pay her bills in Nice, when Sir Peregrine, instead of sending her supplies, unhandsomely proposed to come himself—bronchial, unsympathetic, much-married, heavily paternal, close-fisted, and altogether detestable?

What a contrast to Dr. Garfoyle! Truly he had been a ministering angel to her, and such a nice, modern sort of angel, with its wings glittering with golden bullion, and scattering bank-notes as it flew. There was certainly no other man living from whom she could have taken five hundred pounds quite calmly and with

scarcely any sense of obligation, beyond the evident duty of repaying it if she married someone else.

"It is some use, after all, to be one of *The Guild of Widows*," she said, smiling softly to herself; "and, on the whole, I really think that I had rather be one of Dr. Garfoyle's widows than either Mr. Farnaby's or John Pengelley's wife; at least I would to-day—one can never answer for to-morrow. I'm glad I have discovered that to be a saint has but enriched his nature, where I fancied it had spoiled it."

But the despised Pye, after all, got none of the credit, undoubtedly due to her, for having taken the initiative in this temporary rectification of Mrs. Goldenour's financial position. With a little more trust in Providence, or even in her own powers over the situation, Mrs. Pye might have spared herself the annoyance, and everyone else the distress and disaster which were to result from the mischievous letter which she had afterward despatched to Lady Peregrine Goldenour about her mistress' management of her own affairs, both matrimonial and financial.

CHAPTER XIII

A BRIGHT MESSENGER

ON the morning of the following day, at eleven o'clock, Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby drove up to the villa in his fashionable phaeton, threw the reins to his groom, and, running lightly up the stone steps to the porch, stood tapping and calling in the entrance.

"Well, are you ready, Mrs. Goldenour, to come and retrieve your fortunes? You are to accept me as your escort—that's agreed upon, you know. What! not ready yet? My bays are bad at standing, and the flies are already getting troublesome in this hot glare."

Victoria had stepped out of her drawing-room, in a loosely flowing dress, with a slow and languid air, as though the last thing on earth she was contemplating was the keeping of her appointment to drive with Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby to Monte Carlo.

"My poor little fortunes!" she said; "they are mended already."

How kind of you to remember them at all. So, being in funds, I mean to stay at home to-day, and to be both happy and good."

"Nonsense," he said, with rising annoyance.

She raised her finely outlined eyebrows and looked at him. He saw and rightly interpreted the look as conveying a hint of the desirability on his part of self-control.

"Let us have this out," he said; and as he spoke he turned, and advancing to the edge of the terrace, shouted down an order to the groom to "walk them up and down." Then, stepping back into the house, he continued: "Did we not agree the night before last that I was to call for you, to drive you over to Monte Carlo this morning, and back again later in the day? Well, here I am, and you apparently have forgotten all about it. It's my belief if a man ever did succeed in getting you to promise to go peaceably in double harness for one day, you would forget it or deny it on the next. You are quite incomprehensible. Perhaps you were imposing upon my credulity the other day, when you made sundry interesting financial revelations to me?"

"Not at all," she said; "it was all true. I was tottering on the verge of bankruptcy like so many other excellent people who spend their lives here in peace and comfort; but I have changed my mind, I am not going with you to-day, so pray do not keep the dear bays pacing up and down for me."

"And to what," he enquired, with ill-suppressed anger, "may one take the change in your financial prospects to be due? Have you had a fortunate decease in your family?"

"To the change of wind," she said mockingly.

"Cannot I persuade you to accept me as your driver, if not as your banker?" he asked.

"Neither as my banker, my adviser, nor even as my driver," she answered crisply.

Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby looked moodily down, and crunched the gravel beneath his shining boots in some evident perplexity.

"Then this, I take it, is why you were not at home to me last night?"

"You know I am never at home when the rose-colored lamps are not lighted."

"I see it," he said, suddenly lifting up his head, with the air of a

man elated by the solution of an enigma; "I have guessed it : that elderly parson who was here the other evening is at the bottom of it all. When he passed on his road from the station I observed that you were considerably startled to see him, though you carried it off very well. He is your uncle, your trustee, or guardian; he has come to put your affairs straight. The situation speaks for itself. You don't want me to put in an appearance while the reverend gentleman is here. Well, I'll vanish ; let me know when I may have the honor of driving you again. But whom have we here, coming up the garden-path ? Another uncle ? More like a cousin this time. It looks like a house-agent, calling for the rent," he added, in an aside to himself; "rigged himself out at Margate, regardless of expense."

Victoria, now at the drawing-room window with her arm around her boy, looked up and beheld no less a personage than John Pengelley himself, climbing the terraced walks, in a really startling suit of plumbago kerseymere. It undoubtedly was John Pengelley, eager, hot, excited, large, and stout, carrying parcels. In another minute he had displaced the fastidious Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby in the doorway, and was explaining almost incoherently to Victoria, that "the Huntingdon Road had grown beastly dull," and that he desired "to see the carnival."

"The carnival !" she said, laughing merrily. "Why, next Sunday will be Palm Sunday."

"I don't understand Church matters," he replied, reddening; "fasting has never been a practice in our family. Perhaps it was the Regatta or the Battle of Flowers at Monte Carlo I wanted to see. I know it was something of the sort ; indeed, I have never been abroad before. I only got here last night ; and I waited till I had slept and made myself presentable, you know."

With these words he handed to Bruce two large boxes of marrons glacées which he had procured in Paris at the cost, so he stated, of losing his train, together with a box of chocolate-creams from Cambridge. The boy took them with a gracious, willing smile and pleasant thanks ; but placed them upon a side table, and left them behind him when he quitted the room.

"What an unnatural little chap !" John Pengelley said. "Try them yourself, Mrs. Goldenour ; I can recommend them."

Victoria did as he desired. Indeed, she quite astonished the newcomer by the unexpected kindness of her reception. She seemed quite pleased to see him. He had feared a different and decidedly chilling greeting when he took the great step of coming out quite uninvited, and of taking her absolutely by surprise. He thought it as well, however, to hasten slowly and to defer the proposal he had come on purpose to renew, until he was surer of the meaning and of the continuance of her regard. He stayed to breakfast with her, and she permitted him afterward to accompany her for a stroll upon the Promenade des Anglais. There he made quite a typical figure of an English country gentleman of the stagey sort, for the delectation of the native inhabitants of Nice, if indeed any such were still to be found upon that cosmopolitan parade-ground.

Well knowing his tastes, Victoria introduced him to Rumpelmayer's, and permitted him to treat her to ices and confectionery at will. While so engaged, he begged her to tell him where to dine, as "of course he could not trust his landlord for disinterested advice upon such a delicate subject ; not that," he added, "women were any good either to cook a dinner or to eat it." But she must have some "competent gastronomic critic or culinary connoisseur"—she supplied the terms he lacked, as usual—among her male friends. That man, for instance, who was leaving the house as he entered it, and who had a phaeton with a pair of bays waiting in the road, "all show and no substance there." John Pengelley knew his sort : "kickshaws in the kitchen ; finicking, dandified messing in the stables and harness-room, only fit for a lady's dressing-room ; silver-plated harness and ridiculous fallals to hide the lack of good blood and breeding."

"I should like," said Mr. Pengelley, "to have him, whatever his name may be, in my stables at North Hall for an hour. I'd soon make his lordship sit up, and show him something that would take the shine out of his circus-hacks ! What's his name ? May one ask ?"

But if one might ask, another apparently might not answer. Victoria presumably did not hear, or would not speak. It was evident that she was out of spirits, and that her thoughts were busy with subjects remote from him and from his interests.

When they retraced their steps to the villa, John Pengelley received no encouragement to re-enter the house. The fact was that, in anticipation of Sir Peregrine Goldenour's threatened visit, Victoria was determined to part with Bruce, for the second time in his brief life; and the knowledge that she might have to live for a whole fortnight without his sunny presence had sunk her soul in anticipative sorrow, in a way that no other thing had power to do, save only the memory of the tragedy by which he had been left her sole treasure, the light of her eyes, the solace of her days and nights of loneliness.

Dr. Garfoyle was in his own room the next day, and he was engaged in packing his things. He had determined not to return to England at once, but to go to Milan, and to be in the cathedral there on Easter Sunday. He could not tear himself away so soon. He must at least remain within reach of her possible summons. He must at least wait to learn whether Victoria did actually engage herself to marry Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby; and he must ascertain the result of Sir Peregrine Goldenour's unwelcome visit. He had not seen Victoria again since she drove away with the Italian. She had left him in the olive wood alone; but not in the isolation of sorrow. The grief was there all the time, nay the anguish; yet he was even then aware that that brackish river swept on and lost itself in an ocean of joy; that the sorrow was a birth of love, a growing life, an apportionment of a vaster share in love's own realm; that he had indeed been crowned in that kingdom, though the crown was a crown of thorns. Still there was the deeply recognized consciousness of gain to himself in the gift of his love to her—in the very love itself.

This she could not deprive him of—this enriching of his life, this possession in a large new share of life's fulness. To care for her, to aid her, to stand by her and her child, to smooth her path if he must not walk in it beside her. The river of divine benignity in the consciousness of this power to bless overflowed his soul, and when his eyes grew moist it was with tears of suppressed joy in the realization of the oneness of life and love.

Just then the door opened and Bruce stood before him. It was a dull hotel bedroom, bare and unadorned, but the boy appeared to Dr. Garfoyle framed in the doorway, with the brilliant sunlight

catching his fair waving hair, like a beautiful messenger from some radiant sphere.

"Mother sends me to you," he said, "with her love. She lends me to you for a whole fortnight. You may take me away where you will—only it must not be too far. See, she has written it all;" and he held out a dainty note. "She said I was to tell you there was no one else in the whole world that she would trust me to but you. But you can read what she says." So saying, the child jumped with agility upon the portmanteau and began pressing it down with good intention but slight effect, while his friend read, in Victoria's clear bold handwriting, the words which the child had repeated—with the added entreaty that he would allow Bruce to sleep in his own room, that he would let her know where he proposed to take him, together with the assurance that she would send Mrs. Pye for him, wherever they might be, on the morning of the day that Sir Peregrine Goldenour's visit should be ended. "I must have the boy out of Sir Peregrine's reach," she added. "I live in terror lest he should deprive me of him. He shall not even see the child. I implore you keep him safely for me till my own fate is decided; but indeed, bereft of Bruce, I am nothing but a widowed mother! See how great," she added, "is the sum of my love and confidence in you!"

"Now, where shall we go?" said the boy. "Oh, how nice it would be if only mother were coming too—but not Mrs. Pye, not Mr. Farnaby, and not the other gentleman who has just come here without any luggage but three boxes of sweets. You need only take half a ticket for me, you know; my things are coming; our gardener—a native of Arezzo and married to the cook—is to bring them directly. I can dress myself all but one string; can you tie a bow? Some men can't; I can if it is in front. And shall we write to mother every day, till she says she will come too? How shall we end our letters to her? I shall say 'from your loving Bruce, and I send you a great many kisses'; shall you put that too? I have got a new suit, all white serge; mother made it her own self, and embroidered it in crimson silk, and I am to put it on on Easter Sunday. Where shall we be then, Dr. Garfoyle?"

"We shall be in the cathedral at Milan, Bruce."

"But that's a town, do let us go into the country; there is lots

of time, because I am to stay thirteen whole days and two halves. Mother and I made it out together."

Then Dr. Garfoyle proceeded to explain to the boy that the cost to his mother was too great for anyone else selfishly to accept the pleasure of his company, and he suggested that Bruce should return as the bearer of such a message. The only result was another note, in which Victoria wrote :

"I do not believe that even you are capable of estimating what a sacrifice I make when I give you Bruce for a whole fortnight, and I do it with terrible depression, but I trust you absolutely, as I would trust no one else on earth. Still I have such awful misgivings in parting with him ; pray never let him out of your sight. He is so unconventional ; he thinks and acts for himself. There is never any knowing what he will take into his head to say or do next. He has his fits of inspiration, just as other children have their fits of temper. He might easily get into some scrape, in a foreign town, if not carefully watched, just from being too much of an angel to walk their common ways. Moreover, he possesses such an artistic nature that he instinctively feels impelled personally to complete a picture whenever he can do so, and he will quite innocently assume any prominent or unusual position whatever notice it may attract to him—whether favorable or the reverse—with such an end in view, just as any other boy would undertake a common hourly task."

For his part Bruce was resolute ; his mother and he had decided the matter, and he had evidently set his brave little will to the accomplishment of the genuine sacrifice.

"I am the best thing mother has to give, she says. She promised me to you when I was ill, and people should always keep their promises."

Accordingly they started for Bordighera, not to be "too far off," as Victoria had said.

There they rambled about for a week, the boy never leaving Dr. Garfoyle's side. Together they explored all the country walks. Bruce had laid aside the sadness which at first seemed constantly to lie in wait for him in the thought of his absent mother, and his manner now had a strange charm as he eagerly led his friend to share some gentle triumph, some discovery that he had made in the

wood or on the hillside ; as he led him to admire some new flower, to see some gorgeous beetle with wings of peacock blue or emerald green, and eyes that glittered like diamond stars ; or to dig out a land-shell, to unearth a trap-door spider, or to arrest a green frog in its progress through a clump of bushes of the prickly pear.

Yet, with all Bruce's frank gayety, and in spite of his vivid appreciation of material beauty in his surroundings, there lingered yet about this boy a power of unuttered memory, the penetrating influence of an unforgotten sorrow. A tragic past, unexpectedly rising to the surface and obtaining recognition as a potent influence over the life of a mere child, appealed to the heart more forcibly than when encountered only in the blended experience of an adult person.

At the end of a week Dr. Garfoyle received a troubled letter from Victoria.

"I ought never to have let the boy leave me !" she wrote. "He is my conscience and my guide. It is all over now ! Left to myself, I have drifted into an engagement with Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby. I was so lonely without Bruce, and John Pengelley made himself such a bore ; I believe I had no better reasons. The said John has gone back to North Hall now ; no doubt he will soon find consolation in what are called the pleasures of the table, and will promptly engage a wife who will share them with him. I will repay the sum I owe you directly I am married. Sir Peregrine is due ; he has happily had a relapse which has till now detained him. To his opposition to Mr. Farnaby must be attributed my increase of inclination ; but pray keep my boy out of their way. I cannot fancy having him here under these changed relations. Mr. Farnaby, though he suits me very well, has never taken any notice of the child ; he does not care for boys. Between him and Sir Peregrine what shall I do ? The fact is, I am wretched. If I'd chosen for the boy's sake—as I suppose a good mother should—I should have chosen you. Let me tell Bruce myself. Forgive me, I do not like to think of you as I left you in the olive wood ; but I told you I changed color like a veritable chameleon. When the boy was no longer before my sight day and night, I degenerated and grew disheartened, and now I am at my lowest level. Go to Milan, as you wished, for Easter Sunday,

and take my darling with you to console you, if indeed you need consolation, and are not too much of a saint to need any such lower form of comfort as my boy's lovely face may afford. I give you the best thing that I have to give, better a million times than the gift of my poor self. I am not worth regretting, being well lost. I will reclaim my love myself, in the person of my boy, so soon as Sir Peregrine's departure leaves me free to move."

So to Milan Dr. Garfoyle and the child moved on together, and so long as this beautiful boy, with the starlight in his wonderful eyes, was still by his side, Dr. Garfoyle could not actually realize that he had lost the promise of the mother.

CHAPTER XIV

IN MILAN CATHEDRAL

ON Easter Sunday morning Bruce dressed himself with delight in the soft white clothing, embroidered in blood-red silk by his mother's hands, and Dr. Garfoyle carefully led him to the cathedral.

The sun was hidden by dark masses of cloud, and the shadow deepened as they entered the wonderful forest of marble. Suddenly the tramontana, which had been blowing on and off for the last three days, sprang up with renewed fury ; thick eddies of dust pursued them into the cathedral, but the black clouds were riven, and the glorious sun shone forth for an instant, bathing the marble spires and columns in a brilliant ocean of dazzling light. This rapidly faded, and again the sky was overcast with fleecy clouds, gathering and melting away into the distance, but coming up again and again, and all the while the shifting lights and shadows were chasing each other across the pavements and pillars of the interior of the Duomo, in a fitful, erratic dance ; sometimes touching the soul with darkness deep as night, sometimes uplifting it with rapture like the joy of sunrise upon the mountains.

Both the man and child were keenly, though variously, alive to the penetrating influence of the time and place. Dr. Garfoyle was aware of an unusual glow at the heart, of a new power and fire in his uplifted thought, which held nothing in common with the or-

dinary excitement of mere imaginative ecstasies. As he listened to the stirring music of the mass, and beheld the mighty crowd of worshippers, mingled with visitors of all nationalities, crowding into the sacred building, the infection of religious emotion overwhelmed him. The narrow limits of human personality seemed beaten down by the inrush of divine spirit; and yet every human being stood out in the white light, clear, separate, and distinct. Even the childish figures were prominent and sharply outlined. In the gutters round St. Amwell's all the poor wretches played indiscriminately heaped together; here, every childish figure was shown up with its own light and color, as that which it was truly intended to be. But not among the whole company there assembled was there one figure so individual as that of the boy who silently stood by Dr. Garfoyle's side, an intent observer of the shifting scene.

Dr. Garfoyle looked at Bruce's rapt face several times, and wondered what shape his thoughts were taking. He looked as though amid the impressions which were assailing his intelligence from the external pageant displayed before him, conceptions pure as snowflakes were falling upon his receptive spirit from on high; as though, while his outer ear listened to the marvellous music of the elaborate service, his inner sense caught the whisper of angels as they passed along.

The service of the mass was over; the atmosphere of the cathedral was heavy with incense, and loaded with the breath of adoration. The vibration of the mighty organ-pipes still rolled in dying waves of inarticulate sound upon the upper air; the densely packed multitude began to disperse. An oppressive silence brooded over the shifting masses of people, now forming into groups. In the side chapels and among the pillars it reigned, but chiefly yonder in the very centre of the nave before the high altar, where, in an absolutely untenanted space, upon one of the large squares of Napoleon's stone pavement, a solitary human figure knelt upon a "prie Dieu" chair. The shifting margins of vacant space between himself and the moving groups of people were filled with shade and color, but a single shaft of bright sunlight shot downward upon his black head, touching it as with a sword of flame. All the angles of the motionless figure were sharply outlined by it; accentuated even to the outlines of his shadow.

The man knelt almost as though he were a carven figure, or if he stirred at all his movements were those of a man in a trance. Deep dejection marked his attitude ; people came and went ; no one approached him. His eyes were fixed upon the high altar with a glassy stare, as the eyes of one who, seeing, saw not. The man appeared to be an Italian of the petty shop-keeping class. He was evidently no peasant.

It soon became evident to Dr. Garfoyle that Bruce's attention was painfully arrested by the lonely, melancholy figure, which certainly was extremely remarkable in its isolation, while behind, around, and above, luminous spaces were filled with a motley crowd in constant flux, obtaining ingress and egress to and from the cathedral by the various entrances and side doors, lifting and dropping the heavy leather curtains, and pausing incessantly at side-altars in all parts of the sacred edifice. This kneeling, motionless man appeared like a blur, a blot upon the shifting color and harmonious movement of the scene.

An English lady with her husband, standing near Dr. Garfoyle and Bruce Goldenour, was also attracted by the same sight, and with the habitual freedom of the Englishwoman abroad, addressed a question upon the subject to a bystander, a woman evidently attached to chairs in the place. The Italian matron replied, in her own tongue, that the man was a "penitent" who had been keeping a "novena," or nine days' penance, for some grave fault.

"For nine days," she said, "the poor wretch had been condemned to kneel upon that spot alone, save during the celebration of the high mass. The spot upon which, as madam has seen, his chair stands is then crowded with excellent worshippers ; but from early morning till late at night, he may be seen there. This is, however," she added, "the last day of his penitence ; when the clock strikes twelve he will be free ; at that instant ; and this afternoon the children will all come, even to the least 'bambino,' to kiss the recumbent figure of Christ, which will be displayed just where the man now kneels. Madam should come and see the ceremony, and bring her pretty boy in white and red ; it was instituted by the great cardinal—by the Cardinal Borromeo. What did the penitent do ? Ah, who knows ? He is, without doubt, a man of violent disposition ; a native of Arezzo, so they say."

“His temper must be awfully aggravated by now, poor devil,” said the English gentleman, to whom his wife translated what had been said. “I am sure mine would be.”

“To kneel there sick and hungry, and be stared at for hours by an inquisitive crowd, a mark for all slander; to be avoided like a leper!” added his wife.

The words were scarcely whispered when Dr. Garfoyle, who heard them, was aware that, moved by some sudden inexplicable impulse, Bruce had quitted his side and was already halfway across the intervening space, which separated them from the object of their regard. He made an immediate movement to recall the boy, but it was too late; the child’s conduct could neither have been foreseen nor prevented. He darted across the open space between where Dr. Garfoyle and the English couple stood, and swiftly but noiselessly approaching the kneeling figure, knelt down beside him: a little white figure upon the marble floor.

Then Dr. Garfoyle suddenly remembered Victoria’s warning. Had she not told him that her boy’s conduct was apt to be dictated by motives and impulses which were not superficially obvious, but which were spiritually or artistically dictated or conceived. Dr. Garfoyle became supremely uneasy, nay more—he was greatly alarmed at the child’s escape from his immediate control. To follow and bring him back was impossible. He could not further disturb the devotions of the faulty native by the intrusion of a foreigner, a casual visitor, and, worst of all, of a heretic; for whatever his own ideas as to his church might be, Dr. Garfoyle was naturally well enough aware that in the eyes of this bigoted man he was nothing better than a heathen man and a reprobate; and the child was a heretic too, and his presence could not but be a grave offence to the devotee.

Bruce’s conception of the situation as he had comprehended it from the lady’s translation to her husband was pathetic in the extreme. He no more realized that he was an intruder coming between this sinner and Heaven, than he had felt that he thrust himself between the spring flowers and the sky, when he trod the pathways of the woods at Bordighera and surprised the secrets of the opening blossoms on the terraces.

His vision was too engrossing and too elevated to permit him

any sense of unsuitableness, or any feeling of shyness in his attempt to realize it. The emotions stirred in his childish breast were too pure in their intensity to leave any room for self-consciousness. And any lack of sympathy on the part of the bystanders was due to no failure on the child's part to translate an exquisitely pure and noble impulse into sympathetic action, but to their own remoteness from the loftier standpoint of emotion expressed by the boy. The eye sees nothing but what the heart first feels.

The English lady and gentleman appeared mainly struck with the artistic aspect of the scene.

"What an exquisite picture ! what a lovely boy, with the light shining on his fair rings of hair, in his soft, white clothing ; it's like pure 'white Samite, mystic, wonderful !' How silent and motionless he is as he kneels upon the pavement by the black figure towering above him ! The man seems to all appearance unconscious of his presence ! See," she added, turning to her husband, "I don't suppose such a picture was ever seen in this place before. It is really most striking."

But Dr. Garfoyle, in ever growing anxiety, turned to the Italian custodian of chairs, and enquired of her how long it would be before he might dare to reclaim the child.

"You can be easy, sir," she said. "When the hour of noon strikes the novena will be ended; there is but a short time to wait ; but who knows how he will take what the child has done ? He is a man of fierce passions. Take the boy home, sir, if he is yours, the moment you can get him by the hand."

"Can you not go and fetch him for me ? I will remunerate you."

"I dare not, sir. It is forbidden to approach a penitent or to disturb him during the hours of his act of penitence. I dare not do it ; none dare. We shall but divert his anger to ourselves. Perhaps he will forgive a child an act of foolish pity—who can say ?"

Then Dr. Garfoyle fell upon his knees where he was, overcome by what seemed even to himself to be purely unreasonable terror for the safety of the precious child confided to his care. Then an idea occurred to him. Approaching as near to the *tableau vivant*, to the dark figure of the man and the white radiance of the child,

as was likely to be permitted, he, kneeling still, fixed his eyes upon the boy, striving by a strenuous exertion of powerful volition to bring him back to his side, as it were by some occult exercise of magnetic force ; but he failed utterly ; some power greater than his own seemed to hold the boy ; his gaze was intently fixed upon a luminous spot to the right of the altar. To all that went on around him he appeared utterly insensible, but his whole expression was one of rapt joy and wonder while he waited at the feet of the penitent, like an angel of whom patient waiting prior to glad service was demanded.

Then, when all his efforts failed, Dr. Garfoyle's spirits subsided, and he also remained motionless through the brief remaining interval of time which had seemed so long to traverse ; and his free thoughts soared untrammelled in imploring benedictions on the child. It is to be feared that he forgot the penitent and the greater needs of his soiled nature !

As the last stroke of the clock resounded through the cathedral the man crossed himself, rose hurriedly, picked up the chair upon which his knees had stiffened, restored it to the attendant, and apparently quitted the building without looking round. Bruce returned to Dr. Garfoyle with an ineffable expression of serene content shining in his countenance, and, in answer to his guardian's quick representation that he should not have left his side without leave, he replied in wonder that "the poor man was so unhappy being punished all alone, and that he went to say his prayers by him and to keep him company."

"You should not have done it, Bruce," said Dr. Garfoyle, drawing him on one side and speaking low in his ear. "We are in a strange place, in a strange country where we should be very careful not to give offence : people may not understand your conduct."

"Why," said the boy, "I knew the man, it was our gardener ; he is our poor cook's husband, and sometimes she is afraid he will kill her, and she tries to get away from him. He has a garden and a business at Arezzo—but his wife says that he is such a bad man, that his conduct is cruel ; he is greedy of gain, and all his bargains are good for himself and bad for others, and she prays to the saints to rid her of him. It is terrible to hear such things. I always go away when she talks to Pye ; I have feared him very

much at Nice, and I might not have dared to go near him now only," he added in a still lower tone, "a wonderful thing happened. Dr. Garfoyle, my father told me to do it. I saw him; I often do, you know. I have told you so before. He was standing up above there, on the right, and he smiled at me and showed me the picture of what I was to do. He always does like that, you know. So I could not ask you first, Dr. Garfoyle, because my father had already shown me what I was to do."

By this time they had gained the exit by one of the side doors which opened upon the marble portico. The people whom they met, coming and going, all regarded the boy with cold curiosity or contempt; touching each other and muttering as he passed with his guardian; and Dr. Garfoyle, hoping that the man might have quitted the cathedral, lingered just inside the doorway for a considerable time. When at length he did issue forth, at the top of the semicircular flight of marble steps, he found an angry knot of vituperating Italians gathered, like a swarm of excited bees.

The crowd was gaining in cohesion and increasing in volume and volubility of speech every moment; and, at the instant that Dr. Garfoyle and his charge appeared, from the heart of the throng rushed upon them the man in question—furious, gesticulating, incoherent, in blind, mad rage. The people made way for him instantly. He had lost all the advantages which he had intended to derive from the performance of his penance. He would have to do it all over again. It was entirely wasted. From his point of view the heretic child had mocked and insulted him even in the Duomo. This and much more which Dr. Garfoyle was unable to catch, in the impure local lingo which the Italian used, assailed his ears. Bruce's face grew white with terror and consternation; he could not comprehend what was the cause of the outbreak, nor how his conduct had produced it. No glorified father directed him now; he was no longer an inspired messenger, but a timid, shrinking child, who, with tears in his eyes, clung to his companion. As for Dr. Garfoyle, his one thought was to penetrate the crowd and to escape by means of a street vehicle. He did indeed attempt with his stiff, unfamiliar tongue to enter into some explanation or even apology for the offence so innocently given; but the attempt only enraged the vindictive being, who received his words with

curses and abuse of the vilest, as was evident from tone and manner, though happily the sense was left to be guessed by English ears.

Dr. Garfoyle now caught the boy up in his strong arms and made a determined effort to force a passage through the crowd. But it had increased with incredible rapidity—was as excitable and as vibrantly sympathetic with national prejudice as an emotional race in presence of an offending foreign element is apt to become. That few of them knew the cause of the disturbance mattered nothing to them ; it was enough that some insult had been shown by travelling Protestant English people to good Catholics worshipping in the cathedral. The English man and woman prowling about the cathedral, with red guide-books, talking when prohibited and disturbing the faithful at the most solemn parts of the service unless actually restrained by authority from doing so, were sufficiently familiar and hated figures ; and it needed no effort of imagination, of national sympathies, or of religious bigotry to inflame an antipathetic mob against the intruders. But when firmly grasping the child a second time Dr. Garfoyle made a renewed attempt to effect his escape, the mood of the crowd had characteristically changed ; they were disposed to regard the whole thing as a joke, to amuse themselves at the expense of the strangers, though it might be in a mischievous manner. They barred his passage, laughing and jeering ; no longer hostile, but with more than a spark of malice in their mirth. Whichever way he turned he was hemmed in.

At that instant something happened. The madman, for such the furious wretch might be considered, made a sudden forward movement, well known to his compatriots. Suddenly the cry arose, intelligible even to English ears:

“Take care ! Take care ! He has a knife !” and, before Dr. Garfoyle could change his intention, a woman’s piercing cry smote his ears above all the uproar around ; it made his heart stand still.

At the same moment that he heard the words repeated on all sides, “He has stabbed the child !” Victoria burst through the throng, scattering it to right and to left. She seized the boy, who now lay prostrate in Dr. Garfoyle’s arms, his fair head drooping upon his shoulder, a bright stream of blood flowing over the white garments which her own hands had worked.

Victoria took the apparently dying child in her arms, and without further demonstration of the agony which possessed her bore him through the now unresisting crowd. The people were aghast now at the dramatic representation of cruelty practised upon a helpless being ; tears of sympathy were shed by the women ; murmurs of compassion rippled around ; for the populace had very naturally taken the Englishman, and not the child, to have been the victim sought by the avenger.

“It is the mother ! It is the mother !” was heard on all sides, and the words were sufficient for the Italian women present. “Ah, God !” some of them added, “what a beautiful lady to have for a husband that plain old *padre* !”

At once a carriage appeared as though by magic ; helpful hands pushed them into it ; kind eyes smiled upon them through pitiful showers of tears.

“*E’ la madre !*” was sufficient now for the dullest woman present. But Dr. Garfoyle’s presence of mind and stern sense of righteous indignation could not make him neglect the pursuit of retributive justice, even in that supreme moment. The assassin had disappeared, favored no doubt by the populace ; but Dr. Garfoyle caught sight of the English couple prowling about on the outskirts of the crowd, and he despatched the husband and wife for an English doctor, H. B. M.’s consul, and the commissary of police to whom to make a report at his hotel.

How Victoria came to be upon the spot, and to be—as she evidently had been—an eye-witness of the whole scene, Dr. Garfoyle had no time to consider. It was his first care to ascertain that the child yet lived in the brief transit between the cathedral and the hotel. Neither Victoria nor he spoke to each other, save that he gave, and she immediately observed, some professional directions as to her handling of the unconscious child.

CHAPTER XV

OF FRIENDSHIPS

DR. GARFOYLE bore the child to his room, and laid him on his bed; a hasty examination convinced him that the wound was superficial. His position in Dr. Garfoyle's arms had been his protection; the assassin's knife had first encountered the resistance offered by Dr. Garfoyle's own coat-sleeve, which it had penetrated before reaching the child. Moreover, it had happened that the boy wore a long silk Indian scarf or cummerband wound round and round his slender figure, beneath his light woollen clothing, and these folds of silk had also been of service in turning the blade and making it take a downward direction. It had thus been prevented from penetrating the slender ribs, causing only a simple flesh wound.

Never was Dr. Garfoyle more thankful for the medical education which enabled him to diagnose the case for himself without waiting in unspeakable anxiety for the arrival of the English doctor, whom the friendly English couple were to send.

The boy was conscious now, but in a fearful state of nervous terror. He only seemed partially aware of what had happened, and, strangely enough, he confused the memory of his father's tragic death with this affair in the cathedral; thought that he himself had been wounded in a railway accident, and declared over and over again that he had seen his father in the church where the light streamed down from the great window. Then he began to weep for his mother, whom he evidently had not recognized as being present, and Dr. Garfoyle turned to summon her; but, almost before the words were pronounced, Victoria came forward and revealed herself by the bedside. She had feared to excite Bruce's attention before.

Dr. Garfoyle raised his head in thankfulness too deep for words,

wondering what had brought her to Milan so soon, but having no opportunity of asking her. Her face was deadly pale—as pale as the child's own ; but she was as calm and composed, in the urgency of her great love, as though she had been a hospital nurse come to undertake the case. She bent down and kissed her boy's tender little hands and feet with a perfectly tearless face.

“Now mother has come,” she said, “you will be quite well again, Bruce. She has come to take care of you. You see, she knew she would be wanted.”

She held the child without tears or flinching, while the inch-long stab was examined and dressed. No vital organ had been touched, but there were, of course, all the secondary risks of fever and nervous shock ; more especially in the case of a child so highly sensitive and with such a finely balanced nervous organization as this one possessed.

When the English doctor arrived he calmly took the two people for husband and wife, and addressed all his instructions to Victoria under that assumption ; but such a trivial concern as this was utterly indifferent to them both. When at length she and Dr. Garfoyle found themselves for a moment alone in the adjoining room, he approached her holding out his hands and saying :

“You know I would have given my life for Bruce's, over and over again. Have you heard how it happened?”

“I know it,” she said ; “I was there and saw it all. I warned you that the boy's actions could not be counted on as might those of other children ; he imagined, no doubt, that his father directed him. He is subject to these impulses, or imaginations, whatever they may be called ; half his time he obeys me, and the other half he either is, or fancies himself to be, in communication with his father—and what he may do then I never can predict. This only I can safely say, that at all times his conduct seems governed by purer motives and inspired from some higher source than mine.”

“But you—how came you there?” he asked. “And what about Mr. Farnaby?”

“Letters from England brought me here. I had intended coming on Wednesday, but yesterday I received news from Sir Peregrine Goldenour, so important that I told Brabazon I should leave Nice at once, and must communicate with you. I arrived this morn-

ing, leaving Pye to follow. I entered the cathedral when the service was over, and I saw Bruce keeling, to my terror, rapt in one of his mystic dreams, in the centre of the nave. I could not get near to you for the people, and all the signs that I made to you failed to attract your attention."

"Then you saw that I could not restrain him," he said. "He could not be dearer to me if indeed he were my own son. I entreat you to believe that I have indeed been faithful to my charge."

"There is no life for me if I lose him," she said. "I am his mother before I am any man's wife; before I have any duties toward any other being on earth. Listen to me, Dr. Garfoyle; you need not imagine that my engagement to Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby is going to make the slightest difference. If my child wants me, you may count on me. I will hold him in my arms so long as there is breath in his frail little body or knowledge in his sweet spirit to seek the support of my love: but if he dies, if his father calls him back, it will be to punish me for the choice I have made, and then I too will die and go back to them both; for, in truth, I have no prospect of joy in this world and no life but in his."

Had she so soon realized that she had made a mistake in her selection of the Hon. Lionel Brabazon-Farnaby? Dr. Garfoyle wondered, as he pressed her hand.

"We must speak of these things afterward," she said, turning to re-enter the darkened room, while Dr. Garfoyle descended to interview H. B. M.'s consul and the commissary of police in the hotel salon below.

With the English visitors to assist him, he gave a personal description of the native of Arezzo, signed a document in attestation of the circumstances which had led to the assault, and received the sympathetic remarks of the authorities.

Through all there ran a jarring note which conveyed their sense of the fact that English people never did know how to behave in foreign cathedrals, and English clergymen least of all. Further, there was the unexpressed opinion that the boy must have been execrably reared not to know how to comport himself with more conventional propriety in public places, and not to be more completely under the command of his guardians than he certainly appeared to be.

As a matter of fact the incensed bigot so successfully laid low, until the enquiries for him were over, that he was never brought to justice at all ; and the affair, after having been discussed in the English circle for ten days, was then as completely forgotten as though it had never been. There were, no doubt, plenty of Italians of the lower class who could at any moment have produced the man, and of course his priest knew well enough where he was ; a knowledge which he probably shared with Mrs. Pye who, when she arrived upon the scene, declared that he had gone no further than back to Nice. There, as his wife was still employed as caretaker by the owner of the villa, it may be supposed that he made Mrs. Goldenour unwittingly contribute to his support during the rest of the season. Those who had witnessed the cowardly assault had indeed been sympathetically stirred for the minute on behalf of the beautiful boy ; but it was one thing to deprecate the severity of a punishment arbitrarily inflicted, though possibly deserved, and quite another thing to subject a fellow-countryman to the inconvenience of a legal investigation of his misconduct, for the sake of a foreigner. Moreover, the use of the knife for the speedy avenging of insults and injuries was a prized, though covert, privilege with the lowest classes of the Italian population ; and they were not disposed to risk it, since it might at any time be convenient to have it in reserve.

Mrs. Pye for her part was of the decided opinion that the boy would have been far better in the care of, and minding the precepts of, the common British nurse, rather than in obeying the suggestions of a father in the skies. Mrs. Pye decidedly held the view that “angels were not to be relied upon,” and that if they wanted to get a place on earth as “useful, domestic, ministering spirits,” they would suffer from the competition of the embodied and experienced nurse. In the eye of the authorities the circumstance was regrettable, no doubt ; but the vulgar were of opinion that those Protestant strangers had far better stay at home in their own foggy island, and worship their own inferior divinity in their own heretical conventicles in their own contemptible way.

Day after day the child lay languishing, nursed by his mother and his friend with unfailing hourly devotion. The weather grew very hot, and at nights the delirium from which the boy suffered rose to

a painful height. His father, and the tragedy of his father's death, were ever present to his imagination, coupled with the recent affair in which he himself had played so unfortunate a part. Sometimes he knelt on the pavement by his father's side, and saw his father meet his death there at the hands of the Italian assailant; sometimes he changed places, and himself fell in the agonies of death upon the platform of a London railway station. To all the incoherence of these imagined agonies night after night did the mother listen with a wrung heart, but with a calm outward appearance; and night after night did Dr. Garfoyle stand by her, suffering doubly in thought and affection for her and for the child.

The situation was a trying and anomalous one, but there was scanty time for the consideration of the position, and no time whatever for speech of any other sort than such as concerned the patient. Happily Dr. Garfoyle had been able to make arrangements to remain for a few days longer in Italy; but he would not prolong his stay a day beyond the requisite moment.

While wondering at Mr. Farnaby's slowness in putting in an appearance, Dr. Garfoyle was himself only too deeply aware that to Bruce's mother all men on earth were at this moment but shadows. For her, all love on earth had again resolved itself into the maternal. He had no illusions where she was concerned.

But on an early day Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby arrived, and sent up word of his presence. Victoria declined to leave the boy's bedside, and sent down Mrs. Pye. The response was a request that "Dr. Garfoyle would favor Mr. Farnaby with a few moments' conversation."

Some men are as much out of place in a house where there is illness or death as a butterfly, or let us say a parrot perched upon a coffin, and Brabazon-Farnaby was of this order. He escaped the necessity of solving the darker problems of life by simply shirking them, and he found a good deal to say for his method.

Dr. Garfoyle observed him critically as he entered the room, and found in him a man undoubtedly handsome, upright, and distinguished in bearing, well brushed, faultlessly dressed, with irreproachable mustache and complacent air.

"Tiresome business this!" he said, standing by the formal marble table in the middle of the hotel salon. "Always some nuisance or

other where there are children ! Measles, or mumps, or misfortunes of some sort ! Bruce should be sent to school as soon as he is about again. I told Victoria plainly on the day on which she left that I could not undertake him. In fact, I really am placed in a very awkward position by Victoria's refusal to see me, more so indeed than I feel altogether able to explain to you, Dr. Garfoyle. I must apologize for intruding on your time at all. I think it awfully disinterested of you to have played the part of tutor. I am sure Victoria and myself should never have arrived otherwise at a mutual understanding, with the boy always about. I don't wish to say anything against him, I am sure, poor little chap. No one can be sorrier than I am now that he has come to grief ; but still there is reason in all things, and he was always a disturbing element, and always endeavoring to attract attention ; for my own part, I fully agree with Sir Peregrine Goldenour as to the necessity for his being immediately sent to school. I abhor the Little Lord Fauntleroy style ; it is the type that all young widows aim at nowadays in bringing up their sons."

Dr. Garfoyle took the liberty of differing from Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby as to Bruce's possessing any qualification in common with that artificial young hero, and the conversation drifted toward a fresh issue. The Hon. Lionel wished to know if Dr. Garfoyle had heard from Mrs. Goldenour the contents of those family letters from England which had sent her flitting in such haste to Milan.

"To tell the truth, Victoria was never altogether open with me," he said ; "she wished to consult you, Dr. Garfoyle ; she seemed to look upon you in the light of an adviser—in fact, if you will excuse my saying so, I took you for her uncle on your first arrival ; presumed you were her boy's guardian, and so forth."

"Only a friend," objected the older man stiffly.

"Well, I'm tolerant of friendships between men and women : can quite enter into that sort of thing, especially when the choice is so desirable. I hope that the present arrangement may be continued in the future, and extended so as to include my own unworthy self."

Dr. Garfoyle declined to commit himself, and Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, angered at being left to pay all the expenses of a conversation which he had solicited, took up an impatient, irritable tone.

“All this,” he said, “has thrown me very much upon my back. As a ‘friend’ of Mrs. Goldenour’s, I conclude I am within the limits of prudence when I speak freely to you, Dr. Garfoyle. You are of course aware that she had agreed to our marriage taking place in May, soon after we might all have returned to England. She made no concealment as to the state of her financial matters with me, but all that was nothing to me. Every penny that comes to her from her first husband I should have wished her to spend upon the boy. I understand that he will inherit a considerable fortune at his majority, and meanwhile I am quite disposed to consider that his training should be governed by the wishes of his legal guardian, Sir Peregrine Goldenour. Victoria must be made to hear reason as to that. But meanwhile she has taken offence on the point, and refuses to see me. She has never even informed me of the result of her latest communication upon the subject with Sir Peregrine, and that gentleman himself has failed to put in an appearance. I cannot indefinitely prolong my stay in these parts. Nice is growing hot and unwholesome, and people who belong to my set are gone. I am of course more than ready to sacrifice myself in Mrs. Goldenour’s service, but I have not even the satisfaction of knowing that I am fulfilling her desires. You appear, pardon me, to be indispensable in the present crisis, doubtless because you are both a priest and a physician, while I am neither. I cannot, of course, presume to vie with such double attractions ; but I should be grateful to you, since you have the *entrée* which is denied to me, if you could procure for me some indication as to how long it is likely that Mrs. Goldenour may wish to remain here in your care ; and what arrangements it is probable that it may suit her to make with reference to the future.”

“You must excuse me if I decline to act the part you propose to assign me, Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby,” said Dr. Garfoyle stiffly. “If you have anything of the sort to communicate to Mrs. Goldenour, you had better say it by letter, since she declines to see anyone at present.”

“I’d give my right hand for half an hour’s conversation with her ! The whole of the rest of the women in the universe may go to perdition for me ! I thought, when that bucolic fellow went back to his mother and his stables, that I should be left in peace for the

rest of my natural life ; but though I don't care to make such a confession, yet you will probably understand me when I say to you plainly, Dr. Garfoyle, that I consider Mrs. Goldenour a proficient in the art of tormenting any man who is fortunate—or shall we say unfortunate—enough to attract her attention, to a really remarkable pitch of perfection. For a good woman, now—I speak advisedly—for a good woman and a woman whom one desires to share one's life with, she has mastered all the feminine arts of provocation and instability in a surprising degree. Positively Mr. John Pengelley has at any rate this decided advantage over me, that he has got his quietus, while I am, it seems, simply forgotten ; of no more importance at all than last season's partner at a dance !”

“There is but one answer which I am in a position to make you, Mr. Farnaby,” said Dr. Garfoyle with grave dignity. “Come with me. Mrs. Goldenour is at present absent from her child's room, while the boy is asleep. Come and see him. May I ask you to be as quiet as possible ?”

“Not necessary ! not necessary at all !” said Mr. Farnaby, drawing back with manifest repugnance. “I always take these things for granted, illness and that sort of thing, I mean ; ‘least seen soonest——’” He was hunting for a word, feeling that “mended” would not be quite appropriate, when in spite of remonstrance he found himself silently following his conductor into a silent room, where upon a small bed, drawn out into the middle of the room, and facing the window, the boy lay. He was changed beyond Mr. Farnaby's powers of recognition. The fair hair lay upon the pillow, surrounding a face which had no longer any childlike roundness of outline, but in which every feature was accentuated ; lines of suffering were pencilled around the dainty mouth, the nostrils were drawn in, the complexion was more than ever of the hue of alabaster.

Mr. Farnaby noticed that the little couch was covered with a delicate silk quilt, doubtless of Victoria's fashioning, of the color of the sea by moonlight. In his button-hole was a single pale rose ; he took it out and placed it on the silken covering just beside the child's fingers. All the surroundings, indeed, spoke of Victoria's presence ; and it had transformed the common hotel room into a

dainty hiding-place, a shrine for her fair treasure. The child's light breath was drawn quickly and uneasily, and his mind was visibly agitated even in this his slight sleep.

Dr. Garfoyle drew the curtain across the window, and then, when they had gazed silently at the lovely picture, the two men descended the stairs.

"For the mother of that child," Dr. Garfoyle said, speaking in a low tone, "there can be but one question possible—'will he die or will he live?' Neither you nor any other human being has any existence for her, Mr. Farnaby, save as your life concerns his. Mrs. Goldenour is the child's nurse; at present she is nothing more. If you can accept the position and can await the issue, it is possible—mind, I have no authority for what I say—it is possible that her memory may return to that which has passed between you, and of which she certainly informed me at the time. If you cannot wait, you must take upon yourself the responsibility of either speech or action. I cannot consent to undertake the office you require of me. Indeed, I am inclined to think that you somewhat misjudge my position with regard to Mrs. Goldenour. I have to return to England very shortly; but I have no doubt that before then the matter of life and death will be no longer in the balance."

With this the interview between the two men ended.

Mr. Farnaby sent a bouquet of lovely orchids that evening, and on the following day he left Milan; but he sent a card apprising Mrs. Goldenour that he should hold himself in readiness to serve her in any way, upon receipt of any intimation that he could be of use.

"This rose smells of smoke, of cigars; where did it come from, Dr. Garfoyle?" Victoria asked, when next they were together. Then she heard what had occurred. "So," she said, "Brabazon-Farnaby has been here at last! Oh, yes, I know all about it, and just how he treated you, and how he spoke and looked, and how he graciously explained his willingness to marry me if Bruce were sent to school or handed over to Sir Peregrine, and no doubt I might have married him had I not been Bruce's mother; but, as it is, I am too difficult to love, too impossible to bear with patiently."

"Mrs. Goldenour," said Dr. Garfoyle gravely, "I have to inform you that I leave almost immediately for England; important busi-

ness calls me home, but I have made arrangements which I have to communicate to you. I have sent for one who will be a better doctor for your child than I could ever be."

"If you leave me, my boy will die," she cried. "You cannot have the cruelty. All my hope is in you. Oh, Dr. Garfoyle, stay with us, I entreat and implore you!" and she fell upon her knees and kissed his hands, praying to him for the boon she craved. "Dr. Garfoyle, once more I see it all now; his own father tried to draw him away from me, to punish me for turning to Brabazon-Farnaby. He sees that I am not fit to have the charge of the child, and he will take him back. His own father is attracting the boy back to himself. You have heard and seen it, you know that it is so. It is always that he has heard his father, seen his father; and all this has come upon him and me the moment that I gave my word to Mr. Farnaby. But I will not marry him, I will not; and then possibly Francis, my husband, may relent. I will never see Brabazon-Farnaby again, and you may tell him so. You may tell him to-morrow. Do you hear me? Only do not leave us; for I know that Bruce will die if you go away; stay, on any terms—do you understand? I will never change again! I swear to you that your will shall be mine, and I your slave, or wife, if only you will once more save my son."

"Mrs. Goldenour," said Dr. Garfoyle, gravely raising her up, "I beg you to remember what I have previously told you, that I will never take advantage of your maternal anxieties to secure your offers of affection. If I may not share your hours of joy and ease—and remember that you reserve them for Mr. John Pengelley or Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby—believe me, I am still too much your lover to be satisfied with a forced permission to dry your tears. Mr. Farnaby was your own free choice. You treat him less than well in thus abandoning him."

"How can I marry him when they will take Bruce away from me if I do, even if he lives?—which, in that case, I don't believe would be the intention of Providence, to judge by present evidence."

"Of the intentions of Providence, Mrs. Goldenour, we may be no more capable of judging than midges of gauging the motives of men."

"Mother," cried the boy from the inner room, "my father has been here again."

"You dreamed it, darling."

"No, for he stood by Dr. Garfoyle; and see, here is the rose that he left behind him."

"Dr. Garfoyle," said Victoria, returning, "if you must leave us, tell me this at least, how am I to keep the child? You have seen for yourself that there is nothing that he desires, nothing that can interest him, nothing that holds him here; we all have our concerns in life; we know the force of love; we know the wine it pours into the cup of life; even if it's bitter to the taste there is pungency in the full draught. We have thoughts, affections, motives, wishes, aims; money means something to us, less or more, fame means something, pleasure has its various interpretations, even sin is worth sinning maybe, it gives flavor to insipid moments, savor to dull hours; but for him all these things are not. For him there is no interest in this world; nothing that we have does he desire, nothing that we aim at does he prize; the appeals which are powerful in our ears as motives for continuing to be, are words without meaning to him. No taste of life that he has yet had has given him any comprehension of its value. Oh, my friend, speak to me; you know that this is true. You too have seen it. Unless some meaning or some motive can be brought into his aimless thought of our existence here, he will not care to keep his hold on it. Sir, the child is dying and you know it, because he sees no use in our poor life, he has looked at the threadbare poverty of our mean ways, at the cold monotony of our poor lives, and he turns away half tired by the disenchantment of his vast instinctive hopes, half attracted by the amplitude of some imagined or suggested sphere, transcending ours. He is dying because he does not care to live. I said to the local doctor this morning, 'Tell me now how many days do you give him as he is?' and he answered, 'Three.'"

The answer which she got from Dr. Garfoyle probably amazed Mrs. Goldenour more than any other statement which had ever been made to her; it was emphatic, curt, and unsentimental.

"He will not die; Shadrach Trupper is coming; he will save his life. One of my curates will bring him. I have sent for him. I expect them to-morrow. Then I must leave."

“Shadrach Trupper!” she exclaimed; “what has that common boy to do with Bruce? Pye’s vulgar nephew! What can you mean by this? Is this your reponse to my supreme appeal?”

“Emphatically, yes! Bruce needs another child to teach him how to live—a common, healthy, hearty boy; a boy who knows what a boy’s interests are; a boy to speak boy’s language in his ears; a child to wake the child’s heart in him, to know the things that children care to work for or to gain. Our interests, no doubt, are dross to him, our jokes are serious lessons, our amusements dull ceremonies, our friends formidable or unsympathetic folk, our petty thoughts are all too large, our simplest words too long and grave. Your very yearning that he should live is crushing out his sweet young life. Your kisses bring to him the touch of passionate human hunger, jarring upon his innocent disengagement from the thralldom of the senses. Forgive me, my friend, but Shadrach will find out common things to do and say—indeed he knows no other; and they will understand each other, and you must stand aside and leave them free to say in childish parlance the things which children care to hear and tell. In the place of blue silk coverings and white roses you must hope to see sand, or dirt, or shells, or lizards. There must be no more white embroidered garments, but common indistinguishable clothing. Consider, a man or woman stranded all alone among children would be bored to death with tedium or annoyance; so a little lonely child among dull men and women. What does he know of your maternal love? Instinctively he feels that if he is to grow into a man he must reach out after those things which shall assist his growth; and a mother’s tender, anxious solicitude retards and weakens where it is not subject to the laws which govern his development. There is happily in the childish breast a sort of resentment, an instinctive revolt against all the demands of passionate feeling to which as yet its nature has not become awake; and all the claims of passion in a mother’s love where they do not fatally force, instinctively close its nature up. Shadrach is all that is unattractive in your eyes, I grant it; Bruce thinks him delightful. Shadrach thinks of his dinner-hour before he sees it; Bruce will eat his because Shadrach entirely believes in the value of feeding. Shadrach values money to purchase toys and sweets; Bruce will learn that toys and sweets

are things he should esteem. *You* may load him with them both, and he will turn away wearied or indifferent of your offerings, because you do not care for them yourself, but show your condescension to his age in laying them before him. Shadrach is vain of his lovely voice, and Bruce will listen when he sings comic lays ; if *you* sang he would dream of angels or fancy that his father summoned him away. Shadrach will expound third-rate riddles, and will make stupid jokes, and Bruce will think them all the cleverest things he ever heard ; if you read him stories he would sleep and be too weary to attend. Shadrach has both broad sturdy feet, planted in stout, cheap boots, firmly on mother earth, and Bruce will set his delicate feet in the same prints, to emulate the other's boyish sturdiness of gait. I am no more good, the doctor is no more good. You, for the time being, who are all, must be nothing. Your love is powerful enough, being a mother's, to make itself of no visible account, that it may conquer in the end. Shadrach will come to-morrow. Leave them together. Let Bruce run what you think risks ; let him eat and drink what Shadrach shares. Let him learn to play Shadrach's games—upon his bed first of all, afterward upon his feet ; and Shadrach will teach him how to live, and will show him these things which boyish souls should prize in life."

"Then I may as well marry Mr. Farnaby," she said, "and let the family put him to school as they wish."

"You will do well to make up your mind whether you mean to marry that gentleman or not," he said gravely.

"Do you not see that it rests with you ?" she said impetuously. "You were too scrupulous to lend my vacillating will the support of your stronger judgment. You would not take me at my word. You said I should act upon my own deliberate accord ; that is not my way. I must be held by a will stronger than my own."

"The subsequent consequences of any such conduct on my part would be most disastrous," he replied, "even if I were capable of playing such a part, which I am not."

"Then you have no more to say to me ; neither have I to you. I did but speak as I did because I was angry at your setting aside all the power of my love to help my child, with your very masculine notion that some careless outside influence could do at once what the whole force of my love and devotion of my life had failed to

accomplish. Men are all alike at heart, all ready to take all we have and all we are—wives, mothers, or sisters, it's all the same—and then to turn away and say, 'It is nought.'"

"It is everything; your mother's love is everything, Mrs. Goldenour. It alone is great enough to make such a sacrifice. We poor men should shrink and quail before such a demand as, speaking as a physician, I have just made of you. But I have seen what you are capable of; you, especially, among women. Is it possible that I can ever forget?"

"You are right," she said, responding to the appeal with a ring of triumph in her tone. "When my husband died I held his poor broken body in my arms as long as there was any life left in it. After that, can you doubt, Dr. Garfoyle, that I am strong enough for all the sacrifices or heroisms that life or death can demand of me?"

"I am indeed well assured," he answered gravely, "that neither in life, nor in death, would you fail one who leaned upon your love."

"No, it is you who fail me," she answered sharply. "You are going away."

"I have," he answered, "news from England which would compel my return even if it were the case of my own wife or child; but I shall not leave until the day after to-morrow. Good-night."

CHAPTER XVI

A COMMONPLACE CURE

SHADRACH TRUPPER duly arrived in charge of the curate who had previously decided that when he was a canon he would hear the confessions of lovely women by his study fire, as he imagined Dr. Garfoyle to have done; but this young man was not destined to enjoy the privilege of Mrs. Goldenour's society, for his chief despatched him to see Florence and Pisa, awaiting his return to England on the morning of the third day.

Shadrach arrived decidedly the worse for the long journey; hearing that he had come, Bruce at once faintly demanded his presence.

Shadrach immediately stretched himself full length upon the blue silk coverlet, demolished all its beauty by his usage, took more than his share of the bed, and was too sick and cross to speak a word ; but Bruce took more interest in the condition of the surly child than he had yet taken in anything ; sympathized in the administration of remedies by the solicitous Aunt Pye, and when Victoria came in she found Shadrach and not Bruce the centre of attraction, both to Mrs. Pye and to Bruce himself. She had the intruder removed to his aunt's room and complained of his conduct, but was forced to admit that Bruce slept an hour longer that night after the excitement of welcoming the other, and the arrangement of Shadrach's morning meal afforded him more interest than he had found in any meal of his own.

"Just what we sent for him for," said Dr. Garfoyle. "We judge of children by ourselves, and it is a disastrous mistake. We often misconceive their relations toward each other, as much as they misconceive our relations as men and women ; we can as little enter into the secrets of their mutual attraction and repulsion as they into ours."

The next day Shadrach took to knocking boxes to pieces and to carpentering in Bruce's room ; the noise gave every adult person a headache in half an hour ; but Bruce happily held nails and screws, and lost them in his bed, as long as the other boy required. Shadrach ate and drank three-fourths of all the dainty fare set before the invalid ; but then Bruce took the other fourth, which was double what he would have taken had the other not been there. Shadrach pulled feathers out of the pillows and blew them about the room with bellows from the stove ; and when Dr. Garfoyle came in to take leave of the boys, Bruce's soft, weak laughter was chiming in with Shadrach's common cackle.

"And this is the day which the local doctor gave him as his last," he said to the mother, whom he found half unhappy in her banishment to another room. "He is all right now ; only let this go on ; do not interfere. Bruce has set his face toward this world now, because the other lad has proved to him that it contains common, interesting things to do and see."

"You have been a messenger from heaven to us," she tearfully said.

"Oh, no ! Shadrach is the angel," he replied.

"And is this how we part?" she asked. "What is taking you back to England in such a desperate hurry? Are they going to make you a bishop? Is any important bishop dead? And is his mitre to fall to your share, or his ring and his crook and his crozier, whatever the episcopal impedimenta may be? I am not up in these matters. I have had no time nor inclination to look at the papers, so that I know nothing. Her Majesty herself might be lying in state and it would not have come to my ears."

"Your surmise might prove to be the correct one as regards myself," he gravely replied. "My name has been mentioned to the Prime Minister, but it would be quite premature to mention the subject. The bishopric of Croyland has, as you might have heard, fallen vacant, and I have received letters from England touching upon the matter, which compel my return. I should, however, in any case have left to-day, though I need not trouble you with a catalogue of my engagements."

"And while everybody is waiting for you, and they want you to make you a bishop, you are here nursing Bruce," she said; "it is really quite funny."

"Indeed, I have not yet decided upon my own probable course of action; and in any case my attitude toward yourself, and yours toward me, cannot be affected by any such possible change in external conditions."

This was more than Victoria was at all sure of privately. She well remembered the bishop's wife whom she had met at the dinner-party in Cambridge, where she was first introduced to Dr. Garfoyle. She even momentarily recalled her own threat—or was it to be a prophecy?—that she "would occupy a footstool in the aisle at Great St. Mary's when she should be the wife of a bishop, but not before." It would be one thing to be the wife of so important a person as the Bishop of Croyland, and quite another to be only the wife of a canon. A canon's wife has her position spoiled by the juxtaposition of minor, or mock canons' wives. To be sure there were also colonial bishops and bishops suffragan; but in this case such a consideration was unimportant, since none of these minor dignitaries could touch the genuine magnificence of the occupant of a see with a seat in the House of Lords.

This would mean a position for his wife which Victoria at a

glance saw that she could fill with pride and pleasure, and which she felt at once that she could indubitably adorn, without descending to such adventitious aids as the wearing of a grass-green satin gown. Here was an opening which appealed to the imagination. Then too there would no longer be any ground left for Sir Peregrine's very objectionable feet to rest upon ; he could not, with any decency, interfere in the management of her boy, if his step-father were a bishop. Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby was no doubt a perfectly unexceptionable choice, as regards position and means ; he was rich, and in a certain set in society he was not unpopular ; but then he was attached to the diplomatic service, and might at any time be under the necessity of adjourning to some unpleasant climate ; in which case she might have to accompany him ; and in this case the difficulties with regard to Bruce which had been raised by his father's family would be doubled. Nobody could with decency object to a bishop to bring up a boy, even such a boy as Bruce. So Victoria played battledore and shuttlecock with the pros and cons, even while Dr. Garfoyle innocently stood before her, hat in hand, debating the precise form of " adieu " required by their very peculiar position ; and quite honestly asserted that the question need make " no difference " in her attitude of regarding him. The important point was perhaps, Victoria thought, " Would it make any difference in his mode of regarding her ? Happily the Scriptures only stipulated that a bishop should have but one wife ; they didn't go into details as to what the characteristics of the chosen one should be."

Her vagaries of thought were arrested, however, for Dr. Garfoyle calmly observed :

" I am not even bishop designate yet, remember, Mrs. Goldenour ; and I may feel it right to decline the appointment."

" Oh, why ? " she asked in alarmed tones.

" This is scarcely the moment to discuss such a matter. It rests with my own conscience. It is in that inner court that judgment must be given, when such a step has to be taken or declined. At present I am not in a position to inform you of my intentions."

Victoria felt annoyed. She knew all about the way in which the clergy always accept preferment, as though they were per-

forming a penitential act; how they talk about "duty," "self-sacrifice," and "a wider sphere of usefulness," when in any other walk of life a man would say openly that he had got his promotion and would be congratulated upon the bigger pay; but she had thought the man before her superior to this littleness.

"I might as well weigh whether I'd accept it or not, if I was offered the post of lady-in-waiting, with a couple of thousand a year," she said shortly. "Men must keep up these solemn farces, and must make believe to themselves, I suppose," she said inwardly. "I can really see he positively believes that he is still quite doubtful whether he is going to accept a big bishopric or not. He feels himself quite great enough to decline it. That is what does them good, to feel themselves equal to some important step, to some grand heroic action, which they are not going to perform. They wish to get the credit of self-sacrifice, and to enjoy the goods fate offers them, both together." Yet a sense of uneasiness possessed her, for her conscience told her that Dr. Garfoyle was perhaps the one man in a thousand capable of actually governing his conduct by absolutely unworldly motives

"He positively may decline," she murmured to herself, "and if he does, what shall I do, where shall I go, what will become of me? Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby is sure to get a foreign appointment. I cannot go with him and leave my boy, but they will not dare to take Bruce away from me if I marry a bishop." The man before her was a strong man, with a deep and powerful nature; her very dependence upon his strength was an appeal to his sense of protecting and cherishing care. "What am I to do?" she sadly repeated. "Can you not advise me? I am not any longer engaged to Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby. I know that he has been here, that he has treated you as though you were Bruce's paid tutor, or at best my grandfather, about a hundred years old; any other man but yourself would have called it insolent. Have you nothing left to say to me?"

"All that I had to say to you, Mrs. Goldenour, I said, if you remember it, in the olive-wood by the villa at Nice. Since then circumstances have changed. This is neither the time nor the place for explanations."

"Will you give me three months again, and, if I am constant

this time, will you forgive the way in which I have treated you?" she cried imploringly.

Dr. Garfoyle made no answer, for at that instant Bruce's voice was heard calling from his bed :

"Is that Dr. Garfoyle going away? I do not want Dr. Garfoyle to go away."

"Then shall we go back to England," said Victoria, "as soon as you can move and see him there again?"

"Oh, yes, mother, may we? and go and live in St. Amwell's Vicarage, me and Shadrach and all together?" Victoria thought it was not exactly in that humble locality that she proposed to live, for her part. "And," continued the boy, "may I go to the Higher Grade School, and both of us play cricket in the boys' playing-field near the house? We have been making lots of plans; at least, I have been making them, and Shadrach has been saying, 'Rather'—haven't you, Shadrach? Ah, Dr. Garfoyle is really gone! What a pity; isn't it, Shadrach?"

Shadrach shifted from one foot to the other, and muttered an unintelligible reply. He stood somewhat in awe of Dr. Garfoyle, and more so of Bruce's fine lady mother. His own notion of a mother was naturally of a homely, substantial person, like Mrs. Trupper or his Aunt Pye. A person who could make a pudding; who administered scrubbings when a boy required it; who was even prepared to clean his boots upon occasion, so much did she value his Sabbatical appearance; a person who could scold a good deal, but who might nevertheless be absolutely relied upon to prefer her son's good to her own, whatever might happen. And Bruce's fine lady mother did not come up to Shadrach's standard in any one direction; whenever she spoke to him, he only muttered and looked shame-faced; whenever she entered the room, he wished with all his heart that he were out of it.

"We are going to wear each other's clothes, and we are going to be helped first in turns, Mrs. Pye says." If Mrs. Pye had said it, Victoria privately noted that Mrs. Pye should suffer for it. "And when I get well," the child continued, "we are both going into the big bath in the corridor together."

His sweet eyes fairly danced with joy at this invigorating prospect, and a pretty color tinted his pale cheeks with a soft rose-pink.

But his mother's heart sank within her ; this was Dr. Garfoyle's notion of a cure, and she did not dare to interfere, lest, if she took her own way, she might have cause to repent it. But in her annoyance and disgust she wrote to Dr. Garfoyle a few days later, confessing that his prescription was answering wonderfully, that her boy was rapidly recovering, but weakly lamenting that Mrs. Pye could not be withheld from profiting by the situation.

"One would think," she said, "that Pye felt she had kindly consented to be an aunt solely that Bruce might have the benefit of her vulgar little nephew for his companion. She yearns to make me sensible of the obligation. I am confident she would be quite capable of charging so much per hour for the benefit of his companionship, and my darling throws himself into it so eagerly. Is it not strange that, refined as he is, he should not feel the difference which, after all, exists between himself and Shadrach Trupper?"

To which Dr. Garfoyle duly responded :

"Why does he not feel it? Because it does not exist ; because the child's vision is too divinely pure for our poor false distinctions ; his noble spirit too unwarped by our pitiful conventions. Believe me, Mrs. Goldenour, to live with children such as yours, should be to see with their candid eyes, to trust with their unspoiled hearts. It is a privilege for anyone—than which there can be none greater—to see with the vision of the angels which are in heaven. We try to teach them our poor ways when, if only we would learn of them, they would lead us straight by easy pathways to the wisest judgments ever uttered."

In the course of affairs it chanced that Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby's chief and patron, Lord Debutts, not having achieved the success expected from him in the last of his numerous appointments, was at this precise epoch transferred, at the suggestion of the permanent under-secretary for Foreign Affairs, from the Diplomatic to the Foreign Office. And Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, who felt that his chief's recent unpopularity was due mainly to his own withdrawal, consented to be again nominated for active employment. Constantinople was to be the new scene of his onerous duties ; and as Lord Debutts had but recently recovered from a serious illness,

upon Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby devolved much responsibility which he might otherwise have shirked.

As Mrs. Goldenour was passing through Paris on her return journey to England, Mr. Farnaby waited upon her himself at the Grand Hotel. He pressed his suit with dignity and determination ; but, although no doubt his manners were well calculated to make a favorable impression upon the Sultan, they failed to attract the inconstant Victoria. Consistent only in her inconstancy, she had now quite made up her mind that she did not love any man well enough, be he bishop, diplomat, or country gentleman, to relinquish the companionship of her son for his. And, as to Constantinople Bruce would certainly not be permitted to remove, to Constantinople she herself had not the slightest intention of going, however brilliant might be the inducements of the position there offered for her acceptance. Indeed, she had further decided that, once for all, she preferred a bishop's palace in England to an official residence at the Sultan's court. So she turned a deaf ear to all Mr. Farnaby's well-expressed representations, and resolutely dismissed him, to expedite his departure in solitary state for his new office.

"You think you have cause to complain of my conduct? So do I. To what do I attribute the change in my attitude toward yourself? To sheer, downright laziness, Mr. Farnaby. You offer me a striking situation, and I thank you for the compliment implied ; but I am indifferent, lazy, aggravating, disinclined. Find somebody else, Mr. Farnaby, and forgive me on your wedding-day. I am a thing of the moment, as you know, and this is not the moment. Let us part with mutual comprehension. Adieu."

She held out her hand, but he refused to see it, and warmed by anger went his way.

There are perhaps few men and women who do not gain, like pills, from being silver-coated ; the coating may be of youth or beauty, the beauty of mind or body, or even of soul. John Pengelley had attracted Mrs. Goldenour probably by the force of his young and vigorous manhood ; Brabazon-Farnaby had held her for a short time by subtle personal perfections of manner and presence peculiar to himself. He satisfied expectations of the external sort. He was not a man that a woman need ever fear to blush for

in society ; Dr. Garfoyle had won her gratitude and devotion by his love of her child rather than of herself, but this sentiment, like the rest, would probably have been powerless to hold her, uncombined with his recommendations of fortune and position. As a mere man he needed something to complete him in her eyes. She found it in the prospects of a palace, lawn sleeves, an apron, and several thousands a year.

CHAPTER XVII

A DOUBLE CEREMONY

ON the second Tuesday in the month of July, a ceremony took place in Westminster Abbey which attracted a good many spectators, even at that fashionable time of year. This was the consecration of Dr. Garfoyle, and of two other inferior bishops, colonials. It had already been announced in the papers about two months before, that the Queen had been pleased to approve the appointment of Dr. Terence Garfoyle—here followed a complete list of his dignities—to the see of Croyland, vacant by the demise of the late bishop. The world, or rather that fragment of it represented by the church people who cared to stop to peruse the lengthy paragraph, had been duly instructed in all that Dr. Garfoyle had done scholastically, academically, and clerically, since he was fifteen years of age. Dr. Garfoyle had also for his part been pretty plainly informed as to what was expected of him socially, politically, and ecclesiastically, when he entered upon his new sphere. But the real fact which interested the instructed minority in the Abbey on this summer morning had not been overlooked by the society papers, and during the ordination service itself, it was whispered from mouth to mouth among the select portion of the vast congregation, that the newly made bishop was going to be married that afternoon. This, it need not be said, was Victoria's own arrangement. Dr. Garfoyle had pleaded in vain for an absolutely private and unostentatious ceremony at eight o'clock in the morning of any other day. But Victoria liked her own way, and she took it of course by prescriptive right on such an occasion as this. What she

would have liked would have been a sort of double ceremony. She would have enjoyed having the archbishop proceed from one service straight to the other, without so much as stepping from his prominent position for a second. She felt quite capable personally of gracefully stepping out of the densely packed ranks of the spectators, a beautiful and blushing bride, with one or two bridesmaids and Bruce as a page ; she would not have more attendants, because it would not be "the thing" for a widow. She would have expected all the bishops, or other clergy present, to remain to assist in uniting her to their newly ordained brother, while "The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden" was being sung by the choir, and the widowed bride's beautiful little son held up the train of his mother's pearl-gray satin.

But in all these flights of fancy she was doomed to disappointment.

Dr. Garfoyle inaugurated his married life by a compromise. A couple of hours after the ordination service was concluded, a perfectly private ceremony, which took place at St. Margaret's in the Abbey Yard, united him to Mrs. Goldenour.

Victoria, leading her boy by the hand, and attended only by the Peregrine Goldenours and Mrs. Bratton-Fleming, advanced up the aisle, and took her stand by the newly made bishop, without the slightest appearance of doing anything of special consequence. To her, this sequestered service had, she thankfully recognized, nothing in common with the bright bridal which imagination recalled to her memory in Sydney. This was nothing but a religious ritual ; what else could it be if you married a bishop ? That was an adjunct to a life that was meant to be one of laughter ; the introduction to a joyful participation in a feast of love. She had formed one of the vast congregation at the earlier service in the Abbey, and, creature of the moment as she was, her emotional nature had then been deeply stirred ; her æsthetic taste had been gratified by the impressiveness of the ceremony, and she would fain have had her special part in it. Had this been permitted, all life would have been temporarily rounded by a psalm for her ; her responsive soul might have been upborne on the wings of music and intercession, until she floated in imagination heavenward by the side of the saintly man whom she espoused—pretty much, per-

haps, like a butterfly sporting and soaring a dozen yards or so skyward, climatic conditions being favorable. In that case his consecration to his solemn calling might have been imitated, at a vast distance no doubt, by her self-dedication to his service ; almost as some conventual bride might dedicate her life to her superior calling, might Victoria Goldenour have devoted herself to this servant of the Church. But by the time that all the crowds, curious and otherwise, had dispersed, while the clergy had gone to lunch at the Bounty Office ; when the organist and the choir had departed to their homes, and the echoes of music were quite dead in the vacant amplitudes of the now silent Abbey, all Victoria's warmth of feeling had died down.

With thoughts dropping down to her luncheon, for she was very hungry, and the morning service had been extraordinarily prolonged, with considerations of unconfessed debts, and with doubts of many things, she stood before the altar in St. Margaret's. Happily the pecuniary aspect of the question could not be considered serious, since she was marrying a bishop, whose income, public and private together, amounted to something like eight thousand a year ; but Victoria had suspicions as to her new husband's views on the personal appropriation of his ecclesiastical income. Indeed, she expected some trouble altogether with his "views" on several matters ; but she meant to proceed carefully in the initiation of her own *rôle* of conduct as his wife. She meant to be firm, yet discreet ; determined, yet always adorable. She proposed to influence him insensibly, until he dropped those peculiar ways of looking at things. Conduct which had been permissible in a bachelor divine must now distinctly be laid aside. She was not marrying the man as he was ; but the bishop as she meant him to be.

But as the service proceeded, when they got to the hymn, "Oh, Perfect Love," a great favorite by the way of the bishop's, Victoria felt inwardly self-accused and reproved ; for the poverty of her emotional progression, the attitude of her thoughts, was beneath the occasion. She was not thinking suitably. What a mercy the man by her side could not know it ! She gave herself a mental heave-up, jumped, so to speak, or played at flying ; nay, for she meant well, she even prayed to fly ; and for a few seconds—

while the hymn lasted—she saw herself and the bishop together, he in full canonicals and she in a soft gray satin of the color of an innocent dove's sweet wing, hand in hand, floating on some luminous cloud, midway between earth and heaven ; and from their outspread hands bland benedictions descended upon the diocese of Croyland, with the marvellous impartiality of the natural gifts of heaven ; conditioned, shall we confess it, in the form of soup for showers, shillings for sunshine, and invitations to the palace for an entrance upon the joys of Paradise !

No small part of the benefit indeed which Victoria proposed to confer upon her bishop took the shape of deliverance from his besetting sin of eccentricity ; and she genuinely meant it too, as a testimony of her real regard for the man and her affectionate interest in him. Love him as she had loved her first young husband, of course she did not, and he did not expect it of her ; but in his generosity of spirit Dr. Garfoyle had never been at the pains to investigate how much the importance of his new position had had to do with the fixity of purpose finally displayed by her, in waiting from April to July for the double event of this important day.

The Peregrine Goldenours had breathed no word of taking Bruce out of his mother's sole and exclusive charge, from the moment that they learned that her choice of a husband had fallen upon so eminent an ecclesiastic as Dr. Terence Garfoyle. Together with Mrs. Bratton-Fleming, Mrs. Gruter, and Helen Keltridge, they sat close beside her during the marriage service, feeling that at last they had even quite forgiven her for having ever married their family's younger son. "Poor Frank's foolish widow had done better than might have been expected !" Lady Peregrine even hazarded the opinion that "Poor Frank would be quite pleased if it was really true, as people said nowadays, that 'they' knew all about everything." But her husband snubbed her for being "superstitious," so she spent the rest of the time in vainly trying to find the marriage service in a stray prayer-book, and said no more till the ceremony was concluded.

In the disentanglement of motives which happily is never attempted in society, it might well have been found that the final determining cause of Victoria's rejection of the man of fashion, and

acceptance of the man of the Church, lay in that fateful letter of the Goldenour family, threatening to take her boy away from her, which sent her in such hot haste to Milan, there to see her darling so nearly lose his life on the steps of the Duomo.

"Who would have thought it?" Mrs. Bratton-Fleming asked her brother, Sir Peregrine, when the marriage was a fact accomplished, and they were leaving the church.

"I always confidently predicted that she would turn out better than you expected," gruffly replied Sir Peregrine. He suffered from chronic bronchitis, and it was apt to be mistaken for temper.

"It was you, Peregrine, who decided to remove the boy from her care," retorted Mrs. Bratton-Fleming.

"He made up his mind about it directly Sir Victor Bruce died, and left Bruce his heir-prospective," said Lady Peregrine. "You see, that made the boy's bringing up of so very much more importance. So long as we all supposed he would have to earn his living, of course it did well enough for Victoria to bring him up in lodgings, living anyhow. He would probably have had to go to the Colonies as soon as he grew up, and it was of no use to worry about him, but of course, as his grandfather's heir, all that would have been highly unsuitable. Now, nothing could be nicer. Having boys of my own, of course I entered into it deeply, and it is such a relief. You see, we were always expecting the undesirable man Victoria was sure to meet abroad, and in point of fact she did meet him; only he was averted by Bruce's accident, and assigned a post at Constantinople in the Diplomatic Corps. So he happily went off, and this very different affair came on instead."

The party having been handsomely entertained at a late luncheon by Sir Peregrine and Lady Goldenour at their house in town, it was proposed during the course of the afternoon to drive down to Lambeth. The archbishop, having one of his usual receptions, had invited the new bishop to appear thereat with his bride and his friends. The bride and bridegroom naturally occupied the foremost carriage; Sir Peregrine, his wife, and Mrs. Bratton-Fleming came next in the family landau, while in a hired fly humbly followed at a distance Mrs. Gruter and her adopted daughter, Mrs. Keltridge. As special friends of Dr. Garfoyle's, these ladies

had been invited to come up from Cambridge for the day to witness the double ceremony. The old professor was worse than usual, and Mrs. Gruter, who disliked weddings at the best of times, was in no placid mood on this auspicious afternoon.

"Lady Peregrine has already been laying herself out for an invitation to the palace," she said, as they jogged along. "Mrs. Garfoyle will certainly have to repay them all the 'allowances' they have doled out to her hitherto, if ever she means to be rid of them now. The bishop had better have written them all checks on the top of his hat in the robing-room at the Abbey if he wished to be free of their claims."

As an old friend of Dr. Garfoyle's, Mrs. Gruter had been privileged to have a favorable introduction to the relatives of the bride. That she had not been agreeably impressed by them might be gathered from these and other comments as they drove along, far in the rear of the bridal party, on their way down to Lambeth.

"Lady Peregrine's reasoning was funny," said Helen Keltridge. "How carefully she explained to you, mother, that, having boys of her own of just the same age as Bruce, she proposed to deprive Victoria of her son, because she was so fond of her own that she thoroughly entered into a mother's feelings."

"Oh, any logic, like any manners, will do in a family!" said Mrs. Gruter. "They will stick to her now like limpets, from what I have seen of them, and about next Christmas they will begin to borrow money of her: not a doubt about it. For my part, I only wish that our friend, the bishop, had been wise enough to accept the bishopric and to reject the bride. Oh, yes; I know you don't agree with me, Helen. You are unnaturally and inconsistently prejudiced in her favor. Why, I cannot conceive; for you are two of the most opposite natures possible. But she has somehow bewitched you. She has cast her spells upon you. Upon you and the bishop both; I suppose because you have much in common with him practically, therefore you see her in the same glorified light that he does. But, as for me, I look at her with a common composite candle, and I see a young woman at once far too pretty and too fast to make any middle-aged man, be he brewer or bishop, decently happy. When once she has got tired of him, which will happen quite as soon as might be expected, he will be lucky if she does not

make his life a burden to him. Indeed, were he not a bishop, he would probably, under her control, advance through the Court of Bankruptcy to the Divorce Court. It would be a novel sensation to see a bishop there ; but perhaps the powers that be may preserve a saintly ecclesiastic from such an undesirable goal. There might even be special legal difficulties, for all that I know to the contrary."

"Don't, dear friend !" pleaded Helen. "I assure you, Victoria is of a very unusual character. There are heights and depths in her nature rarely to be met with even in the most heroic women. There are few acts of devotion of which I privately do not believe her capable. She is as capable of marked and original action in one direction as in another. The women who have gone out on forlorn philanthropic hopes, who have died nursing natives or lepers, who have been pioneers in unpopular paths of progress, have all been made, I am convinced, of the same stuff as Victoria Goldenour—I ought to have said Garfoyle !"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Gruter, quite unmoved by what she heard. "I know all about the very good and very bad business.

"When she was good she was very, very good,
And when she was bad, she was horrid.

That is an elementary axiom in character-reading ; but Victoria Garfoyle possesses, over and above these normal distinctions, a quite special unreliability which is all her own—the result probably of definite psychological or possibly physical conditions, there's no saying which, and I hate being driven into professional corners."

"You expect her to be very bad, mother, because she may undoubtedly be capable of turpitude ; I expect her to be very good. But it is for the same reason that we both recognize that the one thing she will not be is commonplace and colorless ; as to that we are both agreed."

"She is badly mixed," said Mrs. Gruter ; "she is too entirely feminine."

"And what, pray, are you and I ?" questioned Mrs. Keltridge in surprise.

"Oh, you and I are better compounded, we have qualifications of either sort or sex ; we have sterner characteristics to weight or

stifle our emotions ; we can look upon any man as a friend or an acquaintance, while to women of her disposition every man they encounter is a possible lover. She has the feminine instinct so absolutely developed that she can never hold it in abeyance. There are, conversely, plenty of men like her in their way, and a vast amount of mischief they manage to make in the world, as we've all heard till we're sick of the subject. What is wanted is a suitable mixture in all human beings of either sort. Happily for our friend here, she has been moved to marry the bishop by the only other passion of her nature which possesses power over her, namely, the maternal. She has wedded a step-father for her boy. The conflict between the two passions will always tear her to pieces ; and, as things now are, the victory will remain, if I am to prophesy, always with the maternal, so long as she is the wife of Bishop Garfoyle ; but of one passion or the other she will ever be the sport."

"The world's work would never get done without people with passions, mother."

"Nor its play either, my dear, I grant you ; and it would be deadly dull ; that I am prepared to admit."

"So let us welcome Victoria Garfoyle, with all the chances that she introduces into the drama of life."

"By all means, only unfortunately our venerable friend's heart is the dice-box, Helen ; and, unless I am very much mistaken, his wife will rattle it so vigorously as half to shake the life out of his finer organization. It may take him to heaven the quicker, there's always that consideration and consolation ! But here we are. Now for the common congratulations. Stay by me, Helen, and let us get away early. We must catch the eight o'clock train back to Cambridge. I can't imagine why I came here at all."

Dr. Garfoyle's own more equably balanced nature maintained an attitude which his bride's was never competent to touch even in hours of highest exaltation ; on this day he realized, as he had never done before, that man was made for love, and that the measure of the force of his affections registered the capacity of his power for good or evil in the world.

Wide as were the ordinary limits of his remarkable personality as compared with those of ordinary men, on this day they were trampled down by the inrush of exalted, emotional experience,

His fine nature was endowed with marvellous accessions of power, hitherto held in unconscious reserve ; inner springs of feeling, no longer necessarily restrained, welled forth to fertilize and bless all who came within his influence ; and these hours of exalted communion with the purest and most spiritualized conceptions of love as an emanation from the Divine, transfigured the benign countenance of this man of simple habits and of singular purity of nature with the radiance of a spiritual splendor easily recognizable by those who saw him in the light of heaven in which he stood.

No, certainly the new bishop was not hungry, although his bride was, or professed to be so, when they joined the large party who were imbibing tea and coffee and eating ices at Lambeth. Such of the guests as recognized the bishop crowded round them with appropriate congratulations. It had been a perfectly recognized thing that the marriage was to be to a certain extent overlooked, as being a ceremony of secondary importance to the consecration in the Abbey ; moreover, a widow is not supposed to care for too much fuss about her second nuptials ; but Mrs. Garfoyle was too beautiful to be suppressed and taken for granted, as a plainer woman might have been, and all those within reach of her smiles were solicitous to say the right thing to such a very attractive personage.

The new bishop and his bride were to betake themselves forthwith to the diocese. He had no tolerance for the thought of a "honeymoon." He was eager to begin his new duties, and Victoria acquiesced easily enough. She was equally anxious to furnish her new and stately home. She had had enough of wandering about, unframed by adventitious circumstance. She valued the setting of wealth and position. His thoughts were full of the hope to convert convictions enthusiastically entertained upon what he held to be vital questions, into conduct consistent if unconventional ; her imagination was quickened by the intention of representing artistically correct ideas, by faultless decorations and unimpeachable upholstery in the palace at Croyland. He promised himself that he would make the bishop's palace the centre of the cultivated, spiritual life of the diocese ; he desired it to be as a focus where men of every variety and shade of opinion in religious matters, as well as in social and political views, should find it possible to meet,

silencing their differences by the voice of Christian charity. There, their disputes were to be arranged by their spiritual father's efforts ; their anxieties lightened, their loads of care lifted or at least shared ; their very doubts touched by some Ithuriel spear of hope and converted into prophecies of some form of larger faith.

Mrs. Garfoyle meant that her parties should be the best yet seen in the county, where the women might learn of the bishop's wife how to dress, while she held her social court ; and yet—for she remembered her recent past—where even the poorest curate's wife should not be neglected, should not find herself ousted from the winter's fire, coldly crushed if she kept the company waiting while she put her children to bed before she started, and so kept the company ten minutes waiting, or deliberately dismissed if the driver of her hired fly chanced to linger unduly over his prolonged libations.

"We will be very kind," she said to her husband, and he beamed in delight upon her when the gentle words caressed his ears. "Very kind," and she added to herself, for she was not sure how far his sympathies would accompany the sentiment, "and very popular. I hate aristocratic impertinence, there is none like it. I have suffered from it enough in my obscure days of poverty. I mean to be very encouraging, Terence," she added aloud ; and he paused to reflect how her lips glorified the old Irish name by which he could not remember ever to have heard her address him before. Meanwhile, she had silently finished the sentence in words not meant to appeal to his ears. "But I shall gratify all my tastes, because they are so good, so irreproachable, because they rise so far above the vulgar level. Religion is art, and art is religion, and I mean to have the best of both. And science is religion, and philanthropy is religion, and agreeable travel to investigate foreign faiths is religion, and laying foundation stones and eating cold collations is religion, and indeed almost anything is religion nowadays. I've learned all about that ; so to be unaffectedly artistic in taste, and dramatic in disposition, is to be sincerely pious. The more delicious the emotion, the more praiseworthy its cultivation. There are many good gifts, purchasable by pounds sterling, to which a higher source is often attributed. When I was poor I was deeply in debt ; it was wrong, perhaps, but was I to blame ? Not I, for

salvation from that sin as from most others is an expensive luxury largely reserved by the rich for themselves ; now that I am one of them, I too shall cease from sinning vulgarly. Sin is low, there is no doubt about it, and it is largely a matter of personal position."

The day was a hot one even for late July, and the bishop and his bride thankfully found themselves at last alone together in a Pullman car, monotonously moving onward through the falling shades of night, toward their distant home ; whither Bruce in the care of Mrs. Pye had already preceded them. They were sitting side by side, his arms were around her, and his aspect one of entire beatitude.

"Oh, Terence," she said; "I am so happy that I am all composed and compounded of good resolutions. How long do you suppose it will take to evaporate them? It is not because I am rich, you know; poor Brabazon-Farnaby could have made me that, if that had been all that I cared for. But I do like to feel good too ; it is nice, and your goodness is so great that it comes off upon me ! Well ! and why not ? If sin is infectious—which no one, I take it, will presume to deny—why should not you and other saints have the power of actually transmitting the virtue by which you are personally possessed ?"

"The good gifts which you have given me are so many and so greatly beyond what you can know or comprehend, my sweet wife," was the answer, "that all that I have, or that I may be, I pray to pour forth for your benefit. Are you not my spring ? Have you not lit up my life with new hope ? From what disciplines of soul have you not freed me ? From what darkness have you not led me forth into the air of a divinely renewed existence ?"

Victoria paled before these ardent words.

"Yes, dear," she said uneasily; "it is nice of you to feel that; but forgive my interrupting you—did you remember to ask your chaplain to measure the drawing-room carpet for me ?"

The bishop smiled benignly, as one might smile upon an innocent child ; recalled his thoughts, evidently by an effort, from their wider range, bent his fine head in a moment's consideration, and then said :

"Yes, my love, I did remember your commission. I gave him a tape-measure, and he found that the larger room measured thirty-

five by thirty feet. It will be a very good place for social gatherings for people of all classes."

"Of all opinions, you mean," she said, laughing rather unsteadily. "For my part I don't care what their opinions are, so long as their feet are correctly shod, and they don't spoil my gorgeous new carpet." But, even while she spoke, the smile died away from her sweet face, and he saw the tears gathering in her lovely eyes. Immediately he became aware that this tale of a carpet had only been intended as a covering for some deeper thought; and, before he could decide what to select as the cause of sorrow, she had flung her head down on his shoulder and she was weeping bitterly.

"I cannot help thinking of dear Frank," she sobbed. "And of the day on which we were married. Oh, you cannot expect it to be like that! We were both so happy, both so young, and everything in life was before us. Oh, I wish I had died when he did! Oh, Frank, Frank, take me back to you! He is always calling the boy, but he never comes near me! He has quite given me up! He knew I should marry again; but he might know, if he knows anything, and if life after death is no deception, that I have done my best for the boy, his boy, and have never forgotten that I was his mother when I made any decision in life."

"I know, my darling, I know," he said, with rare self-abnegation, as he folded her closely in his arms; "and henceforth you have not only Bruce to console you, but you will allow me to devote all that I am and that I have to protect and console you."

"It is all so sad," she wept. "It is such an awful memory! I never go in a train without seeing it all."

"There are memories so precious, even while so tragic, that we would not be without them, my child. When we count the crushing losses of life we reckon up its gains," he said tenderly; but with her the emotional pendulum had changed tears into smiles already, and she relieved the tension of feeling by easy chatter.

"It is such a funny honeymoon," she said, smiling through her tears, "to be journeying with a bishop to a palace! Frank and I went on the cars up the country as far as they went at all, and there we just took possession of a friend's log-built house. It was nearly empty of things; and we picked up wood and lighted a fire, and we boiled our own coffee from a bottle of essence we took

with us from the stores ; and I had some cakes in my bag, and we got some eggs from a neighboring settler, and we sort of picnicked out for four days. Then we went back to the town, and I wore my new things, and I dazzled even our smartest society in Sydney."

"I like you to tell me all about it," he said, while he stroked her hair with fingers whose every touch was a caress. "I have never been able to understand that a man or woman should prefer to hear that no one has been loved before they were loved themselves. One must at any rate have been in love with love itself before one can truly love any human being ; and further, a man or woman gains greatly by all that has broken up, enriched, and cultivated the nature of the other before their own turn came. The gain of one must be the gain of both, so do not hesitate to speak to me of your past, my beloved." But she was silent, like a bird whose song might not come at call. "And now," he said, "you have passed to my care, and you will teach me how to show my gratitude to you, my darling ; how to do and be that which you wish. You will have more things to teach me probably than if I were a younger man. You may have to bear with much in me ; I have habits acquired in years of solitude which I sometimes fear may drop from me less quickly than I should desire, but I entreat you to remember that these things will be but tricks of manner or effects of circumstance. In heart and in soul I am yours, absolutely and unreservedly yours. I adore you ! I worship you, my beloved ! It is no mere figure of speech."

"And I," she said, smiling archly, and quite forgetting her tears, while she drew herself up and laid her little hands on his shoulders, "what in return shall I do for you ? I will teach you to enjoy your life, to taste it for its own sake, as food agreeable to the palate, not as daily bread to be digested on the road to heaven to strengthen you to get there. Come now, I will talk professionally, as becomes the bishop's wife ; I will teach you to give praise for the blessings of this life, myself among the rest."

"Yourself first and foremost," he responded ; being, though a bishop, very much in love.

"Ah, my dear lord," she said quickly, "already you have admitted the world and the flesh when you took me into your arms.

Who and what will follow ? Answer me that. He generally comes first, it is true, but I may yet be the means of providing the introduction."

"Do not jest on such a theme, my darling," he remonstrated. "Lurking beneath my love of you I find no fleshly devil. I am no anchorite to be scared like my predecessor, St. Guthlac, in the Abbey of Croyland. Hidden in my love for you I find this secret only, that my love lives and derives its meaning from the immortal love whence issue all life and all being. In my love to you I become conscious of a wider universe, in which my largest actions are but as the efforts of insects to us invisible. In it I perceive purposes and allegiances which govern us securely, and which will unite our separate lives in one, while they hold us to the soul and centre of all created things. In it I realize the pressure and inspiration of the divine love element which is about us all. This consciousness surely, and not the vain dread of any lurking presence of evil, is the secret of the highest achievement and benediction alike in love and in life. All that you can teach me of love, teach me fearlessly, my beloved wife, and I shall bless you, while I shall rejoice to learn even the least and most apparently trivial lessons from your sweet lips ; and I accept them all as fragments of infinite truths, vaster than the intellect of sage can singly fathom or grasp, yet which are hidden in the nature of the most innocent child, and which spring up spontaneously in the loving heart of the purest and tenderest woman."

Victoria could not make much of all this, so she changed the subject ; but she felt it was quite the right way in which a bishop ought to make love, if he had to do it at all. There was a superior flavor about it which she liked ; it was pleasant and dignified, and she really did honestly care for him very much indeed, so no doubt it would be all right.

CHAPTER XVIII

TEACH ME FEARLESSLY

THE custom of ventilating every possible grievance in the columns of the daily press has taught everybody of late years to comprehend the financial sorrows of newly created Church dignitaries, when, after hopefully ascending to the bench of bishops, they find themselves seated there with empty wind-bags for full pockets. They have had to reward everybody for their elevation, from important personages, historic officers, crown officers, law officers, and what not, down to clerks, choristers, servants, bedesmen, and alms-women ; all have levied their tax upon the new bishop's good fortune. If added to all this the sanguine ecclesiastic, upon the very day of his consecration, takes to himself a young and expensive wife, what can he expect but pecuniary problems, especially if the bride be one who brings with her for her marriage portion a mighty sheaf of unpaid bills to be met by a single life annuity of fifty pounds a year ?

It may readily be believed that by the time the said wife had had two large drawing-rooms decorated and furnished, likewise her own rooms, her boy's rooms, and all the best guest-chambers, in the most approved modern style, the bishop's assets might be represented by a cipher, while his liabilities had run up to thousands of pounds.

If added to all this upholstery and painting, before the bishop, engrossed with professional duties, receiving representative clergy on business, conducting a vast correspondence, and in a whirlpool of initiatory diocesan affairs, has had time to look quietly round his domestic hearth, his wife has embarked upon glass, china, plate, and ornaments ; has bought a magnificent grand piano ; has added to it a twenty-five-guinea violin, in order to inspire her son with a desire to learn to play upon that instrument ; and if, over and above

all this, she has begun to indulge a pretty taste in pictures, it will scarcely furnish matter for surprise if his lordship should find cause for consternation when he discovers himself face to face with the actual state of his exchequer.

Dr. Garfoyle, passionately in love as he was with his bright and bewitching bride, was overwhelmed with all the business that besets a bishop who makes it a point of duty to welcome, rather than to repel, every legitimate comer. Yet for all this he was not a man to be inattentive to the cost of his strictly private affairs; and he meant to know all that went on in his own house. To that end he reclaimed all the rough deal furniture from St. Amwell's Vicarage, which Mrs. Trupper had already appropriated to the servants' hall, and caused it to be placed in his own private study; while the furniture of his bedroom from the same vicarage sternly and plainly emphasized, in his dressing-room, the vast divergence between his wife's taste and his own.

So great was his sympathy with his bride that it had at first pleased his fancy to see her delight in surrounding herself with beautiful objects of luxury and art. He had no theoretical acquaintance with the cost of such articles, never having considered them before in his life, and for the first time he appreciated the pleasure of possessing a private fortune, when he found that it enabled him readily to gratify Victoria's desires. He was prepared to give her all he could afford, just as an indulgent parent gives expensive toys to an idolized and only child; with this difference, that the precious child seldom has free liberty to go to the toy-shop and purchase for itself, without so much as consulting anyone about the price to be paid for the articles that take its fancy, and such was virtually Victoria's practice. It was indeed some time before the bishop became aware of the value of the things with which his wife was so lavishly presenting herself in his name.

Then there were Victoria's milliner's and costumier's bills which, ignorant as her husband might be of the fact, easily ran to three figures—had, indeed, run into four before the auspicious day in July which made Dr. Garfoyle at once a bishop and a bridegroom. The bride had brought with her a large supply of these very interesting documents, all unpaid, of course; but could mortal bishop have been so churlish in his first participation in the delicious results,

which she procured for the delight of his eyes and the gratification of his instincts of external perfection, as to question suspiciously the cost of the pleasure received? No! He smiled, praised, wondered, worshipped, and imagined that his bride had long owned, or possibly even fabricated with her own tasteful fingers, the dainty garments in which she always appeared before his ravished eyes; and, when calculating his own probable share in her future expenditure, he supposed that an allowance of a hundred a year would be a very handsome sum even for the wife of a wealthy bishop, whose husband loved the very ground she honored by her tread.

Dr. Garfoyle had no intention, however, of remaining in ignorance as to what so nearly concerned himself. There was a conscience clause in every transaction of his life, and his marriage furnished no exception to this rule. Personally he was, of course, a man of simple habits, not merely as a matter of taste but also as a matter of duty. To live upon the least, to give away the most, and ever to prefer simplicity to show; to set an example of utter unworldliness in matters of convention and of fashion; these were axioms too firmly held by him to be set aside through mere inadvertence or abstraction of mind. So Victoria found that her giddy round of unlimited expenditure was likely to be very quickly cut short. Daily she was made aware, even during her first month's residence at Croyland, that a crisis of enquiry, of probable protest, or even of positive prohibition on her husband's part, was rapidly overtaking her. He constantly informed her of his strict intention to regulate their domestic and social expenditure, to assign to it absolute limits which must not be overpassed. He entreated her urgently to procure and lay before him, without delay, a record of all her outstanding debts, whether incurred before or since her marriage. He announced a desire to discharge the accounts of the upholsterer and the furniture people at once. He insisted that the piano should be paid for immediately; asked the price of the violin, and objected to it strongly; uttered the strongest opinions as to the unlimited credit which, in her present secure position as his wife, Victoria was only too thankful to avail herself of.

"Wouldn't you really like to give me sixpence in coppers every morning, dear, with a penny account book to put it all down in every night," she once asked, "to have it audited by the chaplains

and passed by yourself every Saturday evening? I have raised Bruce's allowance; would you like to know what it is? Fourpence a week, no less, and Shadrach has twopence also from the family fund. Pray, does it strike you that that is excessive?"

The gown she had on had cost over a hundred, but she was too discreet to remember that unimportant detail. The opals and diamonds which scintillated upon the breathing loveliness of her neck were not—as her husband fully understood her to have said—"an heirloom in the Goldenour family," but were, as a matter of fact, a kind of wedding-present which Mrs. Garfoyle had made to herself out of the future income of the bishopric. At present she had this necklace, and a good deal of other jewelry besides, upon approval from one of the big London houses. She was at liberty to wear them, by advancing an instalment upon the price; but, if she retained them, they would some day have to be paid for in full. She had put them on this evening to try their effect, also as a sort of hint to her husband that this was the kind of thing he ought to think of, in the way of a suitable expression of his joy in her beauty. Several times in the exuberance of his exalted emotion he had bewailed to her his inability to find any method of adequate expression for the rapture which possessed him. Another man would have known better how to repay a young and beautiful bride for the happiness she procured him; Mrs. Garfoyle was not the woman to be unaware of this. Here was one of the "little lessons of love," which he had implored her to "teach him fearlessly," so she began his education without delay.

"Is it not pretty," she said, turning to him with a bewitching smile, "to see the opals shining like mysterious gleams of moonlight, amid the tiny drops of diamond sunlight, just where the little tendrils of my hair wave in the bend of my neck? See, do you not want to kiss the place? You may if you like. It is too soon to take these little things for granted yet."

"I take nothing for granted where you are concerned, my darling," he replied, availing himself readily of the gracious permission. "For your least look and smile, I thank you from the bottom of my heart; but you do not require these meretricious ornaments. Leave these gewgaws for those who are not, as you are, quite superior to the need of such embellishment."

"Oh, we are none of us above the need of art to make ourselves acceptable," she said. "Pardon me, Terence, but surely that is too crude a mistake for you to make; ecclesiastic as you are. What about your vestments and your ceremonials—eh?"

"There is no parallel," he replied, hastily and emphatically. "Our vestments are not worn for our own sake."

"Are they not, indeed?" she said quickly. "Are they not to beautify you, or to dignify you for the service you engage in? What else are all liveries? An apron and lawn sleeves are your livery, diamonds and opals are mine: while the one is obligatory upon you to perform in, the other is fitting for me to appear in."

"They do indeed become you well," he said, waiving the question with the air of an indulgent father.

"Then we will keep this necklace," she said; this being, as she well knew, as near a permission as she was likely to extort.

She had dazzled him, in fact; had momentarily closed his eyes with the love-light, which she knew so well how to shed around her. But when he prosaically recovered himself and actually ventured to enquire the price of the jewels, even to search for a shop-ticket and to wish to know with singular ineptitude if the thing "was marked in plain figures," she had reached the door of the room. She was on her way to take a last look at the decorations of the dinner-table in the brilliantly lighted dining-room below. It was the occasion of their first formal dinner-party since the bishop's appointment.

Jewelry and kisses are private affairs, excusable possibly even when the bridegroom is a bishop of mature age, and the bride a widow; but the appointments of the dinner-table, when the head of the diocese entertains his leading clergy and their wives for the first time in his official capacity, are not to be left to individual feminine discretion. Hence Dr. Garfoyle deliberately followed his wife, intending to assist at her preliminary survey of the festive scene. Hearing his footsteps behind her, she must, however, have changed her intention, for when he entered the dining-room she was nowhere to be seen.

On the threshold of the handsome apartment all the smiles died out of the bishop's face. He gasped, and stood for a few seconds transfixed in the doorway. Then he put on his spectacles, which

he had not required for the admiration of near and beautiful objects upstairs. His countenance first paled, then glowed with anger at the sight of the magnificent preparations which he beheld.

Table and sideboards were loaded with the most lavish display. He beheld a board spread as though for a prince. Everywhere a costly and sumptuous profusion of gold and silver ornaments, whose barbaric values he was better able to guess at than the possible price of the flashing stones which adorned his lovely lady's neck. The stones might be false, mere paste; but all these centre-pieces and beautiful ornaments were assuredly no sham. This was no inn-parlor to be adorned with gilt or plated wares. Then too there was the china, the glass, the whole elaborate structure alike in excess.

The disturbed bishop picked up an elaborately decorated "menu tablet," which lay before his own proposed place, and read such a list of the viands which he was about to set forth before his clerical guests as choked him by anticipation. Nor was this the worst; he turned to the sideboard, and there—rigid total abstainer as he was well known to be—he perused a tabulated and dated wine list, obsequiously handed to him by the stately butler; wines to accompany appropriate dishes judiciously selected by that functionary himself, who now stood confidently laying himself out for the bishop's approval.

"By whose authority was all this done?" Dr. Garfoyle asked in tones more stern than he would assuredly have used in exhorting any impenitent sinner.

"Beg your pardon, my lord?"

"By whose authority was this table arranged, this list written? How is all this display to be accounted for?"

"Beg your pardon, my lord, by Mrs. Garfoyle's orders. You was too busy to be disturbed, it stood to reason; and being," he added with a deprecatory smile, "not accustomed to drink wine yourself, Mrs. Garfoyle entrusted the selection of wines from the cellar to myself; as I superintended the laying down myself personally, of course I was naturally best qualified to enter into it."

"Into the cellar? Into what cellar?" asked the bishop in amaze; he had no idea that he possessed such a thing, unless it were a cellar full of coals.

He had indeed strictly determined never to own any other receptacle for liquors than the domestic filter or a case of mineral waters.

“Yes, my lord ; from the cellar taken over with the fixtures from the executors of the late bishop ; laid down by him and me during his lifetime. I should have brought you the cellar-book, my lord, only Mrs. Garfoyle desired for you not to be troubled with details. Mrs. Garfoyle herself, sir, if I may be allowed to remark, is a very good judge in such matters.”

Dr. Garfoyle remembered the pretty ostentation with which Victoria drank her glass of Apollinaris at luncheon, and began to wonder when she had made these opportunities of examining the late bishop's cellar ; but even now his astonishment was tempered with gratitude and admiration. How capable she was ! How effective in everything she undertook ! The fault was his : he should have made time to explain his views to her ; he should have shown her how, as a question of principle, the bishop's wife must set an example to all the clerical families in the diocese, in simplicity and frugality of living and entertaining. Of course she could not be expected to grasp all this untaught ; he ought not to have neglected at once to lay it before her. Naturally she had wished to give her guests the best that it was in her power to procure for them. Although, as matter of judgment, he absolutely disapproved of her arrangements, yet how kind and thoughtful it was in her to have taken all this trouble to spare him the distraction of distasteful concerns !

Time was hastening on. The hour for dinner had nearly arrived, yet it might not be too late to insist upon radical alteration of the obnoxious arrangements. This dinner, this initiatory feast, would be the talk of the diocese. Here was everything spread in his own sight, and in the sight of all his guests, which most moved his unworldly soul to anger and abhorrence.

A wasteful profusion of the most expensive foods, marked by a reckless preference for everything that was costly and out of season. An epicure's taste in dishes, accompanied by a connoisseur's knowledge of vintages, sanctioned by the first meal which celebrated his, Bishop Garfoyle's, entrance upon his pastoral duties. It must be confessed that the sort of meal which the bishop would secretly

have preferred, although he had not dared to name his ideas to his wife, would have been tea and cakes, while a few jam tarts added would not have strained his principles ; eggs, too, he held to be very unobjectionable, with some non-alcoholic drinks upon the sideboard. Surely his memory did not mislead him. Had he not especially requested his wife that this evening's entertainment might be "simple and inexpensive" ; hospitable in quantity, but plain in quality ? Inwardly, he had designed that it should partake of the nature of a religious service, and he had thought with much seriousness about it.

This butler, and the footman too: it now occurred to Dr. Garfoyle to remember that he had intended to keep only maid-servants, and that he had requested his wife to give these notice, when he first took possession of his predecessor's house ; in which they had been only allowed to stay on, on sufferance. Their time was up ; why had they not disappeared, and where had these others come from ? For he counted at least three other men, who were strangers to him, standing about in various angles of the hall.

The critical moment was reached. He could not undo what his wife had done, in her absence, without offending her. He blamed himself and rushed to find Victoria. She was not in the brilliantly lighted drawing-room ; the boy Bruce sat there alone, deeply interested in a book. He wore an artistic costume of bronze velvet, trimmed with old point lace, which set off his beauty marvellously. Shadrach, jealously habited by his ambitious mother in cinnamon serge and cheap yellow lace of the same description of coloring, was arranging the music-stands preparatory to practising his solo part in some glees which were, by Victoria's arrangement, to be delivered by sundry members of the cathedral choir in the ante-chamber, after dinner. Shadrach had already been enrolled among the chorister boys of the cathedral.

"Where is your mother ?" the bishop anxiously asked of Bruce. "I must speak with her at once."

"She bade me tell you, father," for so the boy voluntarily called him, "that she had to go upstairs to put old Mrs. Pettit to sleep, before the company came, and she begged that none of us would disturb her."

Mrs. Pettit was the blind and deaf paralytic, the only one of the

St. Amwell's Vicarage patients who had survived to be removed to the palace. Mrs. Pettit still cherished the fond notion that angels shed the odor of divine perfumes which filled her chamber ; and that they still visited her couch to relieve her pain. She had never found her benefactress out.

"She has had three very bad nights, mother says, and she knows that if she is disturbed just now, there will be no chance of her getting any sleep at all," Bruce added.

"Who knows it, Bruce? Do you mean your mother or Mrs. Pettit?"

"I cannot say exactly," answered the boy, closing his book and standing up, with glad, obedient brightness looking into his stepfather's anxious face ; the love between these two, the man and the child, was evident in every look or word exchanged between them. "When we came into the drawing-room we met my mother at the door, and she gave me the message that I have given to you. She said she should not come down until the people had actually begun to arrive. It is a pity that nobody but mother can content that poor old thing."

"No one else can content any one of us, can they, my boy, when once we have found out what she is to us?" said the bishop, caressing the child's head ; but he hastened upstairs with all the speed that was at his command, along a variety of passages, up other stairs, and through several green baize doors, till he reached the door of a distant room in which the blind and deaf paralytic was wearing out the melancholy remnant of her monotonous years.

He found the door locked ; but, after all, the woman was deaf ; he should not disturb her, although he might disturb his wife in her ministrations to her. What was the risk of a loss of a night's rest to one poor old woman, who must soon pass into an eternal silence, from which no bishop's voice on earth would have power to summon her, compared with the disastrous effect of such an example of apparently extravagant regard for the gratification of the senses, and for such an ostentatious display of the advantages of wealth, as that which Victoria's arrangements, left uncontrolled, would compel him to give to his clerical friends? He knocked impatiently at the door.

“What is it? Who has come? Pray do not disturb me for just five minutes more!” pleaded, within, the voice which he loved so well; and the picture of his wife with the diamonds and opals sparkling on her lovely neck, in all her magnificent attire, the nurse of the helpless and afflicted creature, in that plainly furnished room, rose up before the bishop’s imagination, in all its vivid intensity of realistic effect. But that other picture from down below effaced it. And he grew warm with anticipative shame as he saw himself seated in half an hour, or even less, at the bottom of his own table, the mere puppet of his servants’ will, as they handed round seductive dishes and stimulating beverages which it offended his conscience to offer or to share. So he resolutely set aside the lovely vision of what must be taken as his wife’s angelic devotion and beauty, and manfully replied:

“But I must disturb you, Victoria. It is a matter of principle; it is of the greatest importance. Pray attend to me at once, or I shall be positively driven to act independently of you! I cannot possibly permit such a display as has been prepared for our guests. I cannot conceive where all that plate has come from. I really must beg your immediate attention. I also wish to learn by what authority the butler has been permitted to take upon himself such a catalogue of wines. This is really a very serious matter, my dear!”—hammering lustily at the door. “I must really entreat you to come downstairs with me at once. I could not set your arrangements aside without consulting you. I should be loath indeed to give orders contrary to yours in your absence. I must positively beg your assistance. I expect to hear the first arrivals at any moment. Pray come with me, Victoria, and assist in rectifying what is wrong.”

Then Victoria’s voice, in soft and tender tones, like those of a dove cooing upon its nest, met his ears.

“Oh, dear, what is wrong? Have they not done as I told them? How sorry I am! But surely, dear, you can see to it now. Poor Mary Pettit has her head on my arm. Go, dearest husband, for love’s sake, and see to it for yourself. You will surely know what is best. If they have not done as they should, it will be a matter of a few moments to set it all straight. Pray suppress or alter all you will, or call Mrs. Trupper, she is—or should be—very well up

in your ways. She knows your simple tastes, which of course these others cannot do; but poor Mary Pettit seems very failing to-night: she has just dropped off into a troubled sleep, with her head at rest on my bare arm. Call Trupper or Pye, and bid them do just as you wish. They have orders to come for me here the minute that the people begin to arrive."

The bishop turned away, pondering upon the second little lesson which it was his fate to receive.

"But can you not come, my dear love? I should be so deeply grieved to contradict your wishes in the matter."

The bishop waited for an answer; none came, and he went away with a sigh. He was not himself ready for dinner; he had been beguiled into spending the brief moments which he had designed to devote to his own toilet to affectionate admiration of his wife's. He hurried to his room, not, however, omitting to ring the bell in Victoria's room loudly as he passed through it. In the course of five minutes it was answered deliberately by Mrs. Pye. He shouted to her to go downstairs into the dining-room, and to desire the butler to wait upon him. The man came, received the bishop's hurried instructions to suppress three-fourths of the wines upon his list, and to remove certain prominent ornaments from the table.

Hastening downstairs as soon as possible after his messenger, the bishop had no sooner entered the dining-room than he found himself confronted with the dean, the archdeacon, and sundry other eminent clergymen, whom his butler had already ushered into the room, with the view of showing them their proper places at the table. The hall was filling fast with the expected guests, and the host had the additional mortification of being caught by his new friends apparently anxiously surveying and personally approving of the display which had excited his disgust. He beat a hurried retreat to the drawing-room, where Victoria came smiling in to receive her guests as though nothing at all had happened; which indeed it had not, for somehow, when they descended, the table was pretty much as it had been before. The gold and silver ornaments were about as numerous, and all the wines came round just as the butler had intended; the bishop refusing to pass them, even at dessert. He himself broke a roll of bread which he found

in his dinner napkin, and drank a glass of water, which he presently procured with difficulty. His state of mind was so widely removed from his usual calm serenity that he found it difficult even to inaugurate conversational topics with his customary felicity. Like one who has not on a wedding garment, he sat at this feast of his own providing; as one ashamed of his own hospitality, he saw dish after dish make the circuit of his table; as one who was a traitor to his own most cherished principles, he beheld one wine after another fill the brimming glasses of his secretly astonished guests. It was the mistake of an inexperienced man who had not yet learned to assign precise limits to his new wife's authority; to himself, as Victoria's husband, a like experience would never again recur. The meal proceeded, the moment at which the bishop felt himself expected to say "grace" came. He would most cheerfully and thankfully have said it over porridge and beans; but this meal had been so far from what he had intended! He had inwardly regarded it as his first communion with kindred souls, in this his diocese. For him it was to have had a hidden significance, purely symbolical and sacramental. When the moment of expectation came he felt that all eyes were turned upon him; all ears attentive, to hear his thanksgiving for the viands the sight of which he had loathed. His gorge rose, or some obstacle of grief rose in it. No articulate sound proceeded from his lips; he made a sign to his chaplain, the conventional words were gabbled, and the penance was ended.

Victoria rose to depart, following her ladies; but as she passed her husband by the door, she swept his fingers with a secret, caressing touch, which thrilled his jarred nerves with a mingled effect of joy and torture yet unknown to him; and it meant simply a state of increasing sensibility to his wife's moods, as dictated by her moral condition. Soon he was to become acutely aware of a new range of sensibility to his wife's shortcomings. Willingly indeed had he carried her sorrows before their marriage; henceforth he must also share the burden of her failings, even of her sins; dividing in no even portion the bitterness of the repentance which they procured for him, if not for her.

After all the guests had gone that evening the bishop retired to his study, sitting alone over the fire; the door opened and Victoria

peeped in, still in her lovely toilet. She came behind him noiselessly, took his head in her two hands, and embraced him, smiling. He observed that the subtle sense of some emanation peculiarly sweet and unique, which he was accustomed to associate with her bewitching presence, was exchanged for the first time for some strong artificial perfume, such as every chemist sells to any lady's-maid. The impression of artificiality gave external form to his dissatisfaction. Swift to read the lines imprinted on his countenance by the effect of her own personality, Victoria exclaimed :

“Am I not perfectly poisonous to-night, with this dreadful reek of musk?”

“Why do you use it?” he asked. “I never noticed it before.”

“For poor Mary Pettit's sake. I have sprinkled it upon her bed, and she still believes that her poor chamber is redolent of angels, so she does not miss me when I leave. Indeed, unless I touch her, she no longer knows whether I am there or not. She is still surrounded by an odor of sanctity!” and, as she said this, Victoria laughed merrily.

“Such conduct, my beloved,” he said, holding both her hands while he spoke, “is, like our festal display of the evening, hardly in accordance with the simple truthfulness of nature which it has been my joy to admire in you.”

“My dear lord,” she said promptly, “pray learn at once that I am nothing if not dramatic; to get any flavor out of life at all, you must not only live it but dramatize it. Pray comprehend without further delay—it will save trouble in the end—that I am one of those women who, as soon as they cease to set examples to themselves, become warnings to others! I have not yet actually decided whether, as the wife of the Bishop of Croyland, I shall most largely find my uses as a warning or as an example. You, I know, of course prefer the latter; but consider now—is it not fairly possible that as much service is done to mankind by those who immolate themselves as examples of what comes of doing the wrong thing, as well as by those superior persons who display the advantages of doing the right? Do you not suppose it takes more courage to be a warning rather than to set an example? It may even represent a higher form of self-sacrifice. There, now I've left you something to consider! Good-night! ‘Do as the bishop's wife

does,' or 'Don't do as the bishop's wife does,' may in the end prove to be equally valuable advice when quoted by the wives of the common clergy, such as those who have dined with us to-night !”

“Victoria ! ‘The common clergy !’ That is a term of which I cannot sanction the employ. I entreat you——”

But his wife had left him, laughing, and he subsided into a deeper world of revery. It must be remembered that he was still entirely and intensely under the influence of the passionate love of her beauty, which she knew so well how to fan into a perpetually rising flame ; and the conflict between the outer aspect of his fortunes and the inward emotions of his soul was torture to his keen sensibility. To adore Victoria, and to disapprove her conduct ; to recoil from fellowship with her in the highest interests, while tied to sympathy with her in personal association ; this was the power of dismaying contrast which shook, for the first time to-night, his troubled spirit. With a keen sense of dismay he realized once again, in mature life, and when he had least looked for it, the attraction that there might be to crave even a supreme escape, for deliverance from the dominating influence of overmastering sensation. On the former occasion, long ago, in his youth, this bias of mind had been the product of the simple circumstance of his rejection by the woman upon whom he had set his affections ; whence, in his later experience of the perfect realization of his utmost desires, came this revival of that earlier agony ?

Mystic as he was ever at heart, at this moment of absolute human solitude Dr. Garfoyle's thoughts reverted with an almost wistful yearning to the vision of that hidden land of restful truth, to that Nirvana of the soul, told of by Eastern sages ; now to his imagination made doubly alluring as a relief from the strenuous efforts of modern endeavor demanded of one who had become at once a bishop of the nineteenth century and the master of a restless and ambitious woman's destiny. He mused long upon the necessity for avoiding the inherent falsities of modern civilization ; yet was there not in very deed a deep underlying truth contained in the remembrance that the ideal, spiritual state must perforce manifest itself in and by the actual, natural state ; must grow up through it and out of it ; overcoming its resistance, just as the brown earth yields in the springtime to the upward impulse of the flowers,

which by myriads force their way to life and beauty by very virtue of its apparent opposition.

On the following Sunday there was a special service in the cathedral. The bishop was to preach there for the first time. It was the thing to be present ; so every seat was occupied half an hour before the time, and it was with difficulty that the officials even reserved a chair specially set apart for Victoria in a prominent position, close to the raised steps of the chancel. There seated she was virtually behind the pulpit, which was further advanced in the aisle. No sooner had the sermon begun than it chanced that Victoria's eyes fell upon the white face of an elderly woman, who had already been standing for nearly an hour, wedged in between the walls of the chancel arches and a small and compact body of unyielding men. A thought darted into her mind which made the bishop's lady smile; quick as she was in all her actions, she had inducted the white-faced old person into the seat of honor, and had taken up her own place on a stray hassock close by, before the astonished recipient of the benefit could collect her wits to remonstrate or to decline. It was done with most charming simplicity and elegance ; Victoria scarcely touched the hassock's ears with her daintily gloved fingers, and her handsome skirts swayed and swept white circles round her on the dusty pavement, while her husband's harmonious tones breathed earnest sounds into the empty space above the silent people's heads ; thus she apparently listened to the sermon, a mark for universal interest and admiration. So few women could sit upon a footstool in an aisle with no loss of dignity or decorum ; but Victoria could—when she chose. Long ago, as we have seen, she did not choose ; but those were days wherein there might have been some mistake about her voluntary acceptance of an inferior position.

“Terence,” she said that day at luncheon, while innocently sipping a glass of soda water, “it was such a pity you couldn't see me this morning. I've kept my little vow. I expect you have forgotten all about it, but if you do make little vows you should keep them, should you not, especially when it becomes your perpetual obligation to set a good example? I have sat upon a footstool in the aisle during the delivery of the sermon ! Now, do you remember what I mean ; and how I said to you that day in Cam-

bridge that when I was a bishop's wife I'd do it ; then and not before ? I pretty well guessed it would come true, even when I said it ; confident utterances carry their own completion ; bold words bring their own fulfilment. Did that come in your sermon, or in Bruce's last copybook ? Forgive me. I've forgotten. Bruce, you shall write out this afternoon all you can remember of what your father preached this morning, and let me correct it when it's done."

"Was it not a little too good to be true ?" he asked, smiling.

"What, the sermon or my conduct ? If you mean the latter, very likely ; but I meant to keep my word. There's nothing like consistency, it's a better thing than conventionality ; for which by the way it is often mistaken. Don't you like to hear of it ? Now, why doesn't it please you ? Why, I'm sure it was humility and unostentation ; and those are the things you are always sighing for, early and late."

"Dramatized, my dear ; don't do it again."

"Well, and what does all the drama aim at when it is most effective, if not the perfected expression of fine sentiment ?" she asked.

"Precisely, my dear one ; you confound a church with a theatre, a sermon with a play ; that is exactly my meaning."

"My position is my part," she answered ; "I am thankful when I play it well ; and pray applaud and do not hiss me, I entreat you. I am easily discouraged, and your age lends weight to your censure, my lord."

The bishop apologized at once for both.

"I am nothing," she kindly explained, "if I am not dramatic—no one gets anything out of life if they merely live it and do not dramatize it. Whatever you expect to get out of life you must already have taken care to put into it. There is general wisdom for you, bishop ; and for particular advice you will be wise ever to remember that the woman you have married is one of those who, the moment that they cease to set examples to themselves become warnings to others."

"Really it was charming to differ from such a sweet-tempered woman as this," so the bishop fondly tried to believe ; moreover, had he not entreated her "to teach him fearlessly, and was not all this an educational process for him ?"

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE TOP OF AN OMNIBUS

EARLY in November the bishop went off on a round of visitations, confirmations, and so forth. He was to be absent a fortnight, every night of which he was to occupy a different room in a different parsonage house and to inspect different churches and schools ; he had resolved in time to visit every parish in his diocese. There had been no more dinner-parties at the palace since the first unlucky attempt. Both husband and wife felt that before another was given something would have to be decided as to whose arrangements were to have the preference ; and pending the decision, by common consent no more formal invitations were issued. Meanwhile Victoria had accepted an invitation which her first husband's elder brother, Sir Peregrine Goldenour, and his wife had virtually given to themselves, to come and stay with her at Croyland during her husband's absence ; and she took the opportunity of giving another party during their stay.

On the afternoon of the day on which this event was to come off, she was sitting alone in the drawing-room, when an unlooked-for visitor was announced. This was none other than Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby. He explained his presence by saying that he came into the neighborhood on a matter connected with his sister's stables—in fact to cast his eyes upon a pair of horses which might possibly suit her for a new carriage. But Victoria was not altogether disinclined to believe in the power of her own superior attractions ; and she did not give the horses all the credit for dragging Mr. Farnaby out of town at an important crisis in his public and private affairs.

“ Why, I didn't know you had a sister ! ” she exclaimed ; “ and how on earth do you come to be here buying horses for a sister that I never heard of, when your government and your chief are, as

everybody knows, minded that you should be in Constantinople, shadowing the Sultan?"

"I was sent over. I came back as the bearer of important despatches from my chief to our authorities here."

"It's a queer tale," said Victoria.

"Possibly," responded Mr. Farnaby; "but as I am neither a discharged gardener nor a footman out on leave, suppose we drop the subject. I am here. That is enough for me, if not for you, Mrs. Garfoyle. The bishop is away on a confirmation tour, I believe?"

"Yes, the bishop is away," she said, "but what do you know about confirmations?"

"Well, I certainly do not wish to be operated upon myself; and I am not aware that I ever took the trouble to read a similar set of notices before I perused that which informed me that the bishop would be absent, but——"

"Let us return to the horses," said Victoria impatiently. "Why shouldn't you make the purchase for me, instead of for your problematical 'sister'? If she actually exists—which, pardon me for doubting—she has horses enough and to spare, I am sure; whereas if I want to dine out I have to go in a dirty cab, and am even thinking of buying a book of tram tickets for my expected visitors. My credit is good now, in both worlds; I will repay you at once. Well? Why do you hesitate?"

"I am not afraid to take the risk, Mrs. Garfoyle," said the gentleman, with a slight emphasis upon the name, which might be taken to imply that it was in Bishop Garfoyle's name and not in Victoria Goldenour's that he possessed such a comfortable confidence.

Victoria understood the innuendo and colored with anger. But at that instant she was relieved from further embarrassment by the entrance of her brother-in-law and his wife.

"Oh, Peregrine!" she said, hastily performing the ceremony of introduction, "had I not already been asking you to do something for me in the way of a carriage and horses? and here is my friend, Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, quite providentially arrived, who knows all that can be known upon the subject. Now, do let me entreat you both to devote yourselves, early and late, to my service. I shall

expect you both to take up the matter at once, as soon as I've given you some tea."

"Each of us go and buy you a horse and ride it home in triumph, I suppose," said the brother-in-law in derision, "while my wife goes to the bazaar and purchases you a carriage outright. That's just like you, Victoria. I expected to find you grown-up this time at least."

"And you never will," said Victoria angrily, "in the sense in which you expect it."

"I shall be most happy to make over any representative interest which I may possess in this purchase to Mrs. Garfoyle," said the other man with formal politeness, as he accepted a cup of tea from the hands of the fair woman whom he had so lately desired to make his wife.

"That is right," she said briskly; "that is the proper thing to say. See, Everilda," she added, turning to Lady Peregrine Goldenour; "see what an example Mr. Farnaby is setting to your husband. I am sure you ought to be grateful for it."

"Oh, a wife is the person least concerned in her husband's company behavior," said the lady, who was suffering from neuralgia, and whom it did not amuse to flirt with Mr. Farnaby.

"I saw a really handsome landau, with a new improvement in springs, which I could sketch better than describe; look here, like this," said Mr. Farnaby, taking his card-case out of his breast-pocket: "it was finished in really good style. I could enquire the price for you if you wished, Mrs. Garfoyle; I shall have to call at the place in Long Acre again on Wednesday. I could get the name of it, and then you could have it down at once on approbation, if you cared to incur the risk of its not being what you want."

Victoria flung herself eagerly into the subject. Sir Peregrine languidly consented to co-operate in the matter of seeing the horses; and, the affair being so far arranged, Mr. Farnaby blandly accepted an invitation to remove his personal belongings from a hotel in the town, and to make one of the party expected to dinner that night. On this occasion Sir Peregrine occupied the place of the bishop, at the bottom of the table; and there was no other difference observable in the external arrangements. But the guests were not at all of the same order. Victoria had got other people down from town,

who took up their abode for a few days in the palace ; and the clergy were less represented than the county families, out of regard for Sir Peregrine's prejudices. The bishop's absence was an unimportant matter to this set of people ; for what is the use of a bishop if not to be constantly vagrant ? For what does he exist but to be occupied with the recurrent discharge of ecclesiastical functions ?

Lady Peregrine was a spare, dark little woman, eager and emaciated, with an unnaturally high color in her cheeks, and a restless light in her wandering eyes. She looked consumptive, but was possessed of an apparently inexhaustible store of vitality, for expenditure upon a low plane of action. She was "never up to much," but she was always able to accomplish her own desires, and she was never still, and never permitted quiescence in others.

The sisters-in-law had not been friendly in years gone by. Everilda, as the wife of the elder brother Peregrine, had always looked upon Victoria's claims to consideration, as the wife of her husband's younger and impecunious brother Frank, with a coldness which increased to aversion when by his untimely death Victoria was left a widow, with a son chargeable upon the family. Lady Peregrine had five little boys of her own, and though, as her husband's father had handsomely recognized the rights of primogeniture, she had never had cause to complain of the loss of the pittance bestowed upon Victoria, yet she had disliked the idea that Victoria and her boy needed support from the paternal purse. Every shilling which had ever been doled out to them had been regarded by this lady as withdrawn from her sons' portions.

Now, however,—as Mrs. Gruter had upon the wedding-day foreseen would be the case,—no one was so prompt as Lady Peregrine to recognize Victoria's change of prospects. It suited my lady to remember that relations might be permitted to pay each other visits of several weeks' duration, and that they possessed the privilege of imparting family and domestic news to each other, and of making use of each other whenever convenient. She had never remembered the existence of these privileges in the days when Victoria was widowed and poor. But Victoria, whatever may have been her faults, had a sweet and unresentful nature. She took her sister-in-law just as she found her ; accepted her own invitation for herself and Sir Peregrine, and even suggested that

the five little boys should accompany their parents on a visit to their cousin Bruce.

Perhaps this concession in the end cost Victoria more than any personal association with Sir Peregrine or his wife ; for my lady, who had previously despised Bruce as a superior sort of a charity boy, dependent on the family bounty, was now jealously unfriendly toward him, on account of his good fortune. As his maternal grandfather, Sir Victor Bruce's heir, Bruce's expectations dwarfed those of the five immature Goldenours, and Lady Peregrine was one of those mothers who are never fair save to their own sons, and never maternal out of their own nurseries.

Sir Peregrine and Lady Goldenour had purposely timed their visit to correspond with the bishop's absence ; but manners required that they should prolong it a day or two after his return. No similar obligation, however, detained Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, who duly departed after spending but one evening at Croyland, to execute, so he assured her, Victoria's command with reference to a new carriage and horses. It was rash ; but Victoria was not entirely without excuse in the matter. Whoever is, since excuses always come flying at call ?

It was true that the bishop's thoughts had soared as high as a pony-chaise, in which his wife might drive herself about ; and having obtained this concession from his affection, Victoria thought the moment ripe to set up stables ; neither could she be expected to be very precise in her knowledge of the exact number, height, or price of the horses to be purchased, since she never was exact about anything. So she told Brabazon-Farnaby what *she* wished. He understood horses, and the bishop did not ; and of course if Mr. Farnaby was kind enough to undertake the commission at all, she was obliged to leave it to him. She could not send him to buy a pony, as though it were to be a shaggy thing of the big dog kind for Bruce ; nor a pony-carriage, as though it were to be a bath-chair to trundle herself humbly up to the town in.

It was true the bishop had already expressed his views about the expenses of their establishment. Her difficulties, Victoria felt, had not been few nor slight, but she put all this down to the eccentricity of which she was to cure him, as one of the kindest services she could perform for him. Then there was that verbal upholding of

prejudices, miscalled principles, to which Victoria held the clergy to be specially prone ; this disposition also must be checked in her bishop. No doubt it was the proper thing for a bishop to talk about "setting an example of simplicity," to preach "modesty and humility in all the relations of life," and to cry up "moderation in all things," but everyone knew just what the words were worth. Taken at its true value, this phraseology signified compromise. One footman instead of two. A hired house in town for the season instead of one of their own, and one carriage, open or closed, instead of two or three. Dressmaker's bills, too, should be paid once in five or six years, instead of being indefinitely postponed. Of course, a bishop's wife must pay sooner or later ; Victoria perfectly recognized the obligation, but the very respect due to the position, if it enforced moral obligations, at the same time conferred pleasant privileges, of which one, in the shape of unlimited credit, was not at all to be despised.

At the end of three weeks the bishop returned from the tour of his diocese. He was met at the station by his adored wife. She was seated in a really magnificent equipage. It was open, for although the season was late, the day was a bright one in early December, and by her side sat her sister-in-law, with Sir Peregrine opposite. A footman took his humble bag and held the door wide for him to enter.

Dr. Garfoyle had only been briefly introduced to the Peregrine Goldenours at the wedding in July, and, short-sighted as he was, he failed to recognize them. Therefore, when with genuine courtesy he stepped up to the side of the carriage and stood bowing to the lady within it, he supposed himself to be indebted to her for having driven his wife to the station to meet him, but he declined the seat, which he concluded she was offering him, facing his wife.

"Jump in, Terence," said Victoria, hiding some uneasiness beneath a semblance of petulance.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking in declining the favor of a seat?" he asked in some surprise.

"Why, you know my brother-in-law and Lady Peregrine Goldenour. Get in, Terence ; don't keep us waiting here."

"Then whose carriage is this? Lady Goldenour's?" he

enquired in some dismay, to the edification of the man who stood holding the door open for him.

"Why, yours naturally. Come, now, don't be so distressingly innocent, dear; give them your bag, get in, and we will tell you all about it."

Victoria accompanied this exhortation with a little laugh which sounded lightly, but beneath which the acute ears of her sister-in-law recognized a nervous quaver. Lady Goldenour relished the scene.

The bishop stood still for a moment where he was, then he deliberately put on his glasses, and scanned the turn-out which he was told was his own; but there was no irresolution in his attitude, it was calm and coldly critical. Having thus satisfied himself as to what he actually saw, he bowed to the occupants of his carriage, took his bag from the footman's grasp, and turned away. Abruptly, then and there, he hailed a starting omnibus, mounted on the box beside the driver, placed his bag between his feet, and departed along the High Street in pleasant conversation with the man who drove the vehicle from the station to the town.

For a moment Victoria experienced a sense of consternation; really her husband's eccentric habits were more pronounced than she had been aware of.

"Such a pity," she said apologetically, to Lady Peregrine, "that husbands will do these little things before servants."

"It's the same with all men," said the lady thus addressed confidentially; "even Peregrine is no exception to the rule, and, whenever they are particularly difficult, given that they are over forty, they are sure to make it 'a matter of principle.' A young man can afford to be frankly nasty, but a middle-aged man always strives to justify his temper, in order to reconcile himself, if nobody else, to it."

Sir Peregrine was indulging in a fit of masculine abstraction during this confidential communication between the two ladies. He did not care to talk when out for an airing *en famille*.

"For my part, I sometimes wish there were no such things as 'principles,'" sighed Victoria.

"Ah, dear, we should be worse off than we are without them," responded her sister-in-law. "Principles are, you see, to our

minds what petticoats are to our bodies—troublesome, but necessary inventions; men are so fortunate, they can really dispense with them both.”

“Not a bishop!” said Victoria.

“Yes; even a bishop only gets as far as an apron, you see; even he can’t arrive at a skirt. It’s a compromise for a petticoat, or a principle, call it which you will.”

But Victoria was really uneasy at last. She felt that matters were growing serious far sooner than she had anticipated. She was becoming more and more involved in expenses of which she well knew that the bishop would absolutely disapprove, and he, on his part, was manifesting unmistakable tokens of a suspicious attitude of mind. He was beginning very quickly to learn the actual cost of things, to ask inconvenient questions, and to hint at an intention to assign positively ridiculous limits to the unrestricted exercise of her right to spend his income.

Dr. Garfoyle was distinctly less easy to manage than his wife had expected, considering his age and his devotion to herself. There were capacities for sternness in his moral nature which irritated her, and aroused in her more facile disposition an uncomfortable suggestion of latent antagonisms. Still it did not dawn upon Victoria’s mind that the “principles” of which she complained were more than an accidental investiture, an “apron”; which appendage, by tact and persistency, the bishop might in time be got privately to lay aside. He was intensely in love with her, and, though he showed an awkward independence of judgment in many matters, yet Victoria legitimately relied greatly upon the conscious power by which she governed his affections.

The carriage swept round the drive to the front door. Before the omnibus deposited the bishop in the mud outside the entrance gates of his abode, Victoria, the Peregrine Goldenours, and other visitors were already enjoying their five o’clock tea in the drawing-room. Dr. Garfoyle did not mount the stairs, but turned at once into his own study—the room which was modestly furnished with the white deal table and rough benches from St. Amwell’s Vicarage. He sat down in a favorite old arm-chair which had come originally from his rooms in college, scribbled a word or two on a scrap of paper, enclosed it in an envelope, and sent it up to his wife.

It was but a simple entreaty that she would descend to him, and she came.

There was a soft rustle, the door opened, and with the sweetness of a breath of spring Victoria entered swiftly and buried herself in his outstretched arms. Dr. Garfoyle sank into his easy-chair, his sweet wife nestled beside him, her head on his shoulder, her soft hands caressing his still abundant hair. For three weeks they had been parted; now they were together again, each was penetrated with the sense of the other's presence. It was enough! Nay, it was too much for one of them; and that one was not Victoria. She entirely preserved her presence of mind, for the moment was critical.

Not immediately, however; Dr. Garfoyle poured out the pent-up tenderness of his soul upon his beautiful wife; testified to his wondering and reverent joy in the possession of her, and seemed to have momentarily dismissed the remembrance alike of the carriage and pair, and of the omnibus; yet all the while Victoria knew that beneath the tenderest reception of her presence lurked, in this unaccountable masculine being, an obstinate power of resistance, untouched by the warmth of feeling which her charms evoked. To her it seemed an almost pitiful economy, in a man whose professional income was reckoned by thousands, to question his wife's expenditure upon a carriage and a couple of horses. A pony for Bruce had been thrown in, but as yet he knew nothing of that.

With Dr. Garfoyle it was, however, as his wife had remarked, "entirely a matter of principle." He had, in fact, determined that the question of extravagant display and expenditure should be fought out upon this question of a carriage; since all principles, however vast, whether in dispute between nations, or between husbands and wives, must ultimately stand or fall upon some such narrow basis. Lady Peregrine's petticoat analogy did but illustrate a common experience, namely, that all exalted sentiments are generally apt to be driven to solicit expression by very infantine syllables. Perhaps that is the worst that may be said of them.

Presently Victoria felt that it was coming. She removed from her position on the arm of her husband's chair, and, sitting upon a deed-box at his feet, she looked steadily and encouragingly up into his face, while he strove to explain to her, with unshaken firmness,

that she was "at liberty to use hired conveyances as often as she desired" to do so. He would "even go so far as to concede a modest little equipage such as he had previously suggested"; but "beyond a pony-chaise he would not go. If that gorgeous equipage was hers, it must be parted with at once."

It was very hard to resist the attraction of Victoria's bewitching ways. When she sought to cast a spell over any man's senses her power was great indeed.

Dr. Garfoyle soon began to explain that he did not blame his wife for what he held to be a simple misinterpretation of his wishes. How could she comprehend them? He thought that he perceived her to be innocently governed by a conception of what was due to himself as the bishop of the diocese and to herself as his wife. He remembered the humble lodgings in which he had found her first. It must be his part to educate her; to lead her gently by the hand up to some higher view of the situation. His conception of their mutual relationships was primitive, nay, it was apostolic.

Victoria, for her part, cared no scrap about the grounds of his determination. What woman ever does? A man wastes words in such explanations. The fact that remained to be dealt with was the only point for consideration; namely, that a carriage had been bought, and that it must be got rid of. She was too wise to risk her power in a conflict based upon a single detail. So the bishop expressed his will, and she simply acquiesced with a charming grace most touching to his loving heart. Before her beautiful smile Dr. Garfoyle saw all his difficulties vanishing, magically ousted by the potent spell of an all-conquering affection.

Sir Peregrine and Lady Goldenour were to leave the next day. That night, for the first time during their stay, Victoria turned into her sister-in-law's room for a final confidential chat when they went up to bed.

"Everilda," said Victoria, leaning against the mantel-piece, and shading her eyes from the light with a fan, "I suppose it is not possible that Peregrine and you are in want of a new carriage, is it?"

"Oh, we want one badly enough, if it comes to that, and we've plenty of room, if not in town, at any rate at the park, to put up any number, but—excuse me, Victoria, has it really come to that? And so soon?"

Victoria nodded.

"Perhaps it will be different to-morrow morning?" Lady Peregrine suggested.

"There's no chance," said Victoria.

"Is the whole thing really paid for, horses and all, already?" asked Lady Peregrine.

"Yes, unfortunately, they are," sighed Victoria; "for a wonder, every farthing, cash down. My check against Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby's; under the circumstances, you see——"

"Oh, yes, he was the man at Nice, I remember. Have you told the bishop who it was that you commissioned?"

But this question Victoria chose to regard as indiscreet, so she turned a deaf ear to it. She had not forgotten Lady Peregrine's share in the threat to deprive her of the custody of her own child, should she fix her choice upon that gentleman; she had been worsted possibly in the matter, but she did not choose to follow that conversational lead.

"Can you not get Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby to purchase them back for his sister?"

Victoria replied abruptly that the gentleman had already departed for Constantinople, and that such an arrangement was "not to be thought of." Neither she nor Everilda believed in that "sister."

"Then, in that case, of course we must do what we can," Lady Peregrine replied. "Of course we can buy them of you, there's no doubt about that, if the thing must be sold; but as to paying you ready money down, that I am sure Peregrine would never be prepared to accomplish. I cannot say when Peregrine would be able to pay you or the bishop. Of course he would make it as soon as he could; but, after all, Victoria, your husband should remember that we all did our best to support you in luxury and ease in the days before he appeared. If it comes to that, I consider that you owe us more than we are ever likely to be indebted to him or to you for."

Victoria perfectly understood that her sister-in-law intended to obtain possession of the carriage and horses as some little off-set against old scores; that in fact she meant to take them as a comfortable tip; and that she did not intend ever to pay a farthing for them. This being so, it must be confessed that Victoria displayed considerable self-control in passing over Lady Peregrine's insinuations.

"Shall you be in town in May?" that lady asked, thus breaking an awkward silence.

"Most certainly I shall," responded Victoria.

"Precisely; you can have the use of the carriage then, since it will be with us; that will be convenient for you. I suppose we couldn't drive up to town instead of going by train, Victoria, sending the children and maids off first, of course? That would be really a charming plan. I love driving about the country, and, you see," she added, clapping her bony little hands, "that will really relieve you, dear, of your embarrassment at once! Let me kiss you, do! How nice you are looking this evening, my child! Joy at your thoughtful husband's return? There, the matter is all settled. How clever we women are when we're left to ourselves! I will explain it all to Peregrine the moment that he comes upstairs, and you can assure your good bishop this very night that you have found an immediate purchaser for the obnoxious carriage and horses, without going out of the family; and that henceforth you are quite prepared to mount the knife-board of the omnibus, and to take drives with him up and down the town for the delectation of the inhabitants."

Victoria bore herself remarkably well throughout all this trying interview, but "Confound her politics," she inwardly ejaculated, as she traversed the passage to her own room. To what unknown god she addressed the prayer she might scarcely have been prepared to explain, but certain it is that a glow of justifying confidence in her own luck was the result. She did not believe that everything was going to fall out just as Lady Peregrine had planned; though what "stars in their courses" were to fight for her, she was utterly unable to predict.

For the present the bishop was delighted with his sweet wife's compliance with his demand; for "demand" it had been, though labelled as a "desire."

As a gentleman himself, he was of course fully satisfied with the Peregrine Goldenours' proposed purchase of the carriage and horses; and he entertained not a moment's suspicion of the absolute satisfactoriness of the arrangement from a pecuniary point of view. To enquire further would have been an impossibility, and also an insult to his wife's relations.

CHAPTER XX

SOMETHING WRONG

VERY early the next morning, before anyone in the bishop's dwelling was awake or up, hasty feet were heard tramping along the streets, harsh voices shouted eager questions and received excited replies ; and the stream of human life, absorbing perpetual accessions, increased in volume and velocity as the moments passed. Presently, from several outlying pit offices, clanging bells began to ring with alarming and unaccustomed clamor. But all those whom they might have summoned were already on the spot ; no need of compelling their appearance. Though not a large colliery district, there were several mines in the immediate neighborhood which, when in full working order, gave employment to the majority of men and lads in the vicinity. These mines had the reputation of being unusually free from gas ; certain it was that accidents were few and far between, and it may well have been that a supposed freedom from peril had led to a want of caution on the part of some of the workmen.

Down the streets on this early morning the rumor ran that something was wrong in one of the pits. "Something," "not much," was said at first, to explain what had been heard at the pit's mouth : a report, a tremor of the ground, a flash of fire issuing from the mouth of the shaft, succeeded by stifling volumes of dense smoke. But not many men had gone down in the cages, as the hour was yet so early. There was consternation enough, but it would be but a small affair at the worst ; not one of those gigantic calamities which appall the popular heart, and bombard public sympathies by the force of arithmetical as well as of dramatic representation.

The first explosion was, however, followed by a second in a different part of the mine ; and a party of rescuers had scarcely volunteered, when it became evident to the agonized crowd above

that these devoted men must in all likelihood have descended to share the fate of the first victims. And when, after very great difficulty, the workings were reached by a band of brave explorers, eighteen of the miners were found lying dead, and thirty or forty more or less terribly injured where the explosions had taken place.

While all the comfortable folk were still asleep these men had gone to meet their fate; not so very many after all; but then the sufferers had mostly wives and families, whose estimate of the magnitude of their loss was unaffected by the consideration that it was not a big thing in mining disasters. There was another outlet about a quarter of a mile away; but this also was found to be vomiting smoke and fire; while the sound of crackling and burning ahead proved to the rescuers who descended by the main shaft that the explosion had resulted in setting the rest of the pit on fire. It was certain that many of the men had heard the first explosion, for some of them had evidently been running back toward the pit shaft to escape, when they were overtaken and overpowered. At seven o'clock a second search party descended, accompanied by the manager, a mining engineer, three doctors, and other miners who volunteered. Then after a weary half-hour of waiting, the cage began to ascend with the injured men; ascending and descending, with the wounded first, scorched, blackened, torn and rent, in many cases disfigured with agony; while the dead bodies, which were subsequently removed by the ambulances, lay as though each man was in a peaceful sleep; for these there had evidently been no struggle at all; they had simply fallen as they had been overtaken by the poisonous gas or stifling smoke.

When the bishop and Mrs. Garfoyle came down to breakfast, Lady Peregrine already had her bonnet on to show her readiness to be off; like a child who has received an unexpected present, and who wants to get away with it before the donor finds out that it was all a mistake. She begged to have the carriage ordered at nine o'clock for their departure, and the bell was rung accordingly.

The man who answered it looked excited, and whispered something in the bishop's ears.

"An explosion! did you say at the Dell Colliery?" Dr. Garfoyle exclaimed, pushing back his chair and hurriedly rising.

"They are bringing them up, my lord. They have got them

out, most of them. Many are frightfully injured. Some are dead. They say there are fewer dead than scorched and wounded. 'Tis an awful sight to see the wounded, so they say. There was many their own wives scarcely knew when they saw them," and so on—all he knew and a little more.

It was clear that the man shared the love of the uneducated for the recital of horrors. Lady Peregrine turned pale and stopped her ears.

"Oh, Peregrine, do let us get out of this at once," she said. "Such things never happen in town. For mercy's sake let us get back to London!"

Victoria had heard and comprehended; and clinging to her husband's arm, she listened with dilated eyes.

"Let us go!" she cried. "Come, husband, let us go to the pit village at once! The carriage is ordered, let it come round at once!"

"For us!" said Lady Peregrine. "We want to get away!"

"For us!" said Victoria, as she left the room, following her husband. Lady Peregrine turned sharply, but Victoria had departed. She snatched a hat and mantle from the waiting Pye; Dr. Garfoyle himself was distracted by her eager footsteps.

At the door stood the much disputed carriage, awaiting the Peregrine Goldenours' departure. Victoria stepped into it. Without a word the bishop followed her. This was no moment for hesitation. He wanted to reach the pit village at once; he would have ridden there on an ass or a bicycle, had either of these methods of progression served his turn. Indeed he would vastly have preferred the latter machine, had one been at hand.

Speedily they were driven to the mouth of the upcast shaft. The dead bodies had already been removed, but the wounded were still being brought to the surface. Then the bishop saw a sight which he ever remembered to his dying day, with a warm glow at his heart. He saw his dainty, pleasure-loving wife stand side by side with the pit-bank wives; with her own hands he beheld her assist in placing one blackened and bleeding creature after another upon the cushions of the vehicle which he had forbidden her to use. He beheld her tenderly supporting upon her knees the heads of men terribly disfigured by ghastly wounds, while they were gently

driven to their own poor homes, where their wives were ready to receive them. Already the corpses lay awaiting identification in an adjoining building ; these at least were hidden from sight. There were others yet among the living, to whom the bishop's wife devoted her care, the sight of whom was enough to strike dismay into the steeled nerves of the most hardened hospital nurse ; men torn with bleeding wounds or scorched by fires, with their flesh dropping off them in shreds ; yet while Dr. Garfoyle worked with heart and mind and hands, as hard as any miner present ; while he added his skill as a physician to his courage as a comrade and his charity as a Christian, he could but look and marvel at the simply amazing fortitude and energy of this young and dainty woman whom he had chosen for his wife.

With her dress stained and blackened, her hands soiled, her face white to the lips, but calm and steadfast, smiling even upon the distracted women and shrieking children, Victoria moved to and fro on her errands of help and succor ; and her smile was, so the bishop felt, such as some pure dominant soul might smile, which, amid the wrack and ruin of a surrounding world, realized undoubtingly the eternal endurance of an infinite compassion, and believing in it, translated it into human action.

Then and there he could have knelt and worshipped—not the fugitive perfection of this sweet woman's bodily presence, but the glorious beauty of the indwelling soul which animated it. This was what Victoria really was. He had seen her now, he felt, as she stood in the truer light of another plane of being. This was what, having once attained to, she must forever be manifested as, in his eyes. This was the highest truth of her being ; her eternal, upstanding personality in the sight of God and man. And the bishop, holding a collier while a local doctor bound up his hurts, bowed his head and gave thanks for the helpmeet that had been found for him. Could he ever remember again that this marvellous angel of help and healing had deceived him, only a month before, about the price of some paltry jewels ? and had devised strange complications about the purchase of some gold and silver plate ? Could he ever recollect again that her statements in society often made him question the actual testimony of his ears ; or turn with a momentary and lenient glance toward certain systems of

philosophy hitherto discarded by him, whereby these discrepancies of observation and perception might possibly be more easily adjusted than they could be by his own more rigid code? The events of life are sufficiently various to reconcile one to all systems of philosophy, however alien to one's native disposition, and so Dr. Garfoyle now learned. Another item, this, in the education which Victoria had promised him.

Several of the wounded men had to be removed to the town hospital. They had got no wives to nurse them ; or they felt that their families were too large and that they would not have a fair chance with home nursing ; these Victoria arranged to have removed at once under her own supervision, to which end, having shutters placed across the carriage from seat to seat, she herself went with them to attend to their needs. She had the sufferers conveyed two at a time, and never rested till she had safely delivered them all over to the hospital authorities. After all were accommodated there or in their own houses, there yet remained one man, a stranger ; he had neither home, wife, nor belongings, and was unknown to all those who surrounded him. At first he was terribly exhausted, but after a while he was able to tell Dr. Garfoyle that his lamp had been extinguished by the first explosion, and that then he, an utter stranger in the pit, had groped about in the darkness till, overpowered by the blast of the second explosion, he fell and knew no more. He would not hear of being consigned to the hospital ; there was a strange defiant wildness about his manner ; he appeared to be homeless, friendless, and penniless ; yet he would have nothing to do with public assistance, and it was not clear what could be done with him. Excitement of brain and nervous exhaustion had in fact rendered him almost crazy.

Victoria came up while his case was under discussion. Her task was so far accomplished. All the injured were resting on beds for the most part smoothed by her hands, and her present task was ended.

"Put him in," she said, "and let us take him home. It is not a surgical case ; he only needs rest and quiet for the shock to his nerves ; we can nurse him ourselves."

So the stranger was tenderly placed upon the cushions, now all

soiled and torn. Victoria, the miner, and the bishop drove back together in this carriage which, but yesterday, its owner had secretly vowed never to enter. Dr. Garfoyle himself was utterly done up. His heart had been wrung by conflicting emotions, he was at the end of his forces. But Victoria looked after him and her miner at once, insisting upon silence and quiet. She would not discuss the events of the day with him, nor would she ever after suffer them to be made a matter of conversation in any society in which she appeared. When all was over she neither wept nor fainted; she would not even submit to her husband's attempted expression of sympathy.

"Do not touch me," she said, drawing back with purposeful avoidance. "I am not fit. And oh, I am so thirsty! I have rung my bell for Pye, and Bruce, and tea. Pray go back to your room and lie down."

Then she began to give orders clear and concise for the miner's comfort; while she removed the signs of her unwonted ministrations, dressed herself in pure white garments of spotless serge, and descended in due time to an eight o'clock dinner, like a nun from her chamber; so fresh and sweet and pure that contact with the horrors and catastrophes of humanity seemed never to be thought of in connection with her.

There was no sign of the Peregrine Goldenours; but on enquiry Victoria learned that they had actually departed by an early train; Lady Goldenour leaving behind her a special message with regard to a bonnet-box which was missing, and which had as a matter of fact been put into the carriage by mistake and duly conveyed to the scene of the disaster.

"You see, how like Victoria!" the lady had said to her husband; "going off in that excitable way and taking the carriage which was ordered for us; when my things were actually in it, and when we had agreed to purchase it of her. Never even stopping to say good-by to us, either. If my bonnet-box is lost, she shall certainly pay for it, that is the fact."

"The bonnet-box, my dear, will represent your least loss out of it," responded her husband, "so you may as well face the worst at once. Victoria has got her own way; that carriage will never be yours. I'd have backed her to win, had you asked me."

"Oh, yes; you would always stand up for any other woman against your own wife," retorted Lady Peregrine; from which point the conversation rapidly degenerated in tone.

On the morning after the catastrophe at the mine, the bishop and his wife again drove out to the pit village at nine o'clock, to learn how the sufferers had passed the night and were progressing generally. Dr. Garfoyle had followed Victoria when she got into her damaged carriage without a word of objection. When they reached the miners' dwellings, numbers of little children, black from playing in the coal refuse, came running up to see the grand lady and gentleman descend into their midst.

"Give them a drive up and down in turns; pack the carriage as full as it will hold," said Victoria to the coachman and footman, as she followed her husband into the first dwelling, where lay a poor fellow whose legs, having been crushed, had been amputated the night before; and Dr. Garfoyle, glancing back with complete satisfaction, saw ten grinning boys and girls packed into the seats just vacated by himself and Victoria, and driven off in triumph to enjoy an airing up and down, in full view of their proud mothers and other admiring neighbors. It was a very comical, but to the bishop a very reassuring sight, and he blessed Victoria for the original suggestion. When the first load was returned, the footman stood with his hand on the carriage door, looking more than doubtfully at his mistress.

"Take up another set," she said sharply, "and get on the box." The man reluctantly obeyed her, and once more the equipage departed, to the admiration of all such of the mothers as, not having dying husbands inside, were free to come out of their doors and gaze at all that went forward.

At the end of the street a publican of democratic sympathies, wishing to recognize a like spirit where he found it, and to encourage popular sentiments in others, came out with an inviting tankard.

"I say, won't you gentlemen get it hot! Have something to cool your welcome," he remarked, very evidently mistaking the authors of the arrangement, and handing up the pewter.

"Mrs. Garfoyle's own orders," said the coachman, recognizing the attention. So the story passed from mouth to mouth, and grew as it circulated.

For the next two hours the bishop and his wife were busily engaged in the cottages, visiting all the suffering creatures who groaned beneath these humble roofs. Perhaps never was a bishop's wife so popular before. Her praises rang in every mouth. The local papers took notice of her heroic conduct, her political sympathies were decided upon at once, but the tide of conservative feeling among county and clerical families set strongly against her. She, meanwhile, taking no notice whatever of the hubbub, whether laudatory or the reverse, continued to look after each wounded man in his turn, not forgetting the strange, half distraught patient in her own house, nor even neglecting to supply Mrs. Pettit with a daily dose of musk. The suffering men worshipped her, and her husband gave thanks night and morning upon his knees for the benediction of her incomparable presence.

"And yet, you know, after all," said Lady Goldenour, when her husband laid the Liberal local paper in her lap that she might read its high-flown account of her sister-in-law's heroism and devotion, "and yet after all, you know, Peregrine, it is just because Victoria really has no nerves to suffer that she acts as she has done. Remember how she got over it when your poor brother was killed, and how we heard she comported herself when her boy was stabbed in Milan. Dear me ! if it had been you, or one of our dear boys, do you suppose that I should have got over it all as she has done ?"

"No, my dear," replied her husband briefly. "I have no reason to suppose that *you* would have acted as Victoria has done." His tone was enigmatical, and his wife was dissatisfied: she drove her conversational tin-tack in the harder.

"Victoria is shallow, that is what she is. She has no nerves to suffer. A woman who felt more couldn't have done it. Victoria always feels quite nicely; just enough and not too much ; now for me, my feelings are so acute that I never could undertake such gruesome things, you know."

"It's a comfort, then," said Sir Peregrine, "that some women feel too little to act otherwise than well."

Perhaps his words were motived by a clear recollection of a nursery accident the week before, when the nursery-maid chopped off the tip of her own finger cutting bread and butter, and Lady Goldenour had been considered the chief victim in the affair.

“Victoria’s cold, that’s what she is !” the lady resumed. “She looks nice ; but she really hasn’t any heart. A woman who could survive such an event as your poor brother’s death might well be able to stand the sight of any number of wounded men ; but that is just the sort of stagey thing Victoria delights in. She is one of those creatures who thrive upon excitement, and like their sensations strong ; what corresponds to pickles and pork in the region of the kitchen, you know.”

All these sisterly criticisms were jerked out in a defiant manner by Lady Goldenour, as she sat in the elegant drawing-room of her London house, under the influence of her husband’s irritating silence.

“As to that carriage,” she continued, “it will not be fit to use by the time it gets here ; and we shall have to pay for the repairs.”

At this point Sir Peregrine forsook his wife’s enticing company for the freedom of the smoking-room. Marriage presented itself to Sir Peregrine, as to many other middle-aged husbands and wives, chiefly as a discipline ; and while he smoked he wondered, as was his common custom, why he had married the particular woman whom he had selected. To confess the truth, Lady Peregrine was at the same moment perambulating the drawing-room carpet, and audibly asking herself the same question. But the wine was drawn and must be drunk ; and the nursery was the scene of her consolation, when the smoking-room was his ; and thither she presently betook herself. A man may wear a woman’s very soul out ; but her tiny children’s kisses may be worth the price she pays for them none the less—and a woman may fret a man to exasperation ; but he can swear and then escape, and so did Sir Peregrine.

To return to Croyland. In the course of the next few days five more of the wounded miners succumbed to their injuries. These, together with the first victims of the catastrophe, were all to be buried together at the public expense. The funeral service was to be read by the bishop and attended by all the people in the place, big and little, important and insignificant alike. Victoria had been indefatigable from morning to night, and night to morning. The town rang with her praises when her carriage was seen following the funeral cars, not empty, but filled with the widows of the men whose shattered forms occupied the sad row of coffins.

Victoria herself followed in a shabby fly, dressed in simple black garments and accompanied by two weeping women; and her demeanor, as a curate's wife afterward noted, was "something simply lovely."

The bishop and his wife dined together alone on the evening of the miners' funeral, and Victoria, who had worn mourning all the week, astonished her husband by descending resplendently attired in rose-colored silk. She seated herself opposite to him, with her feet on the fender, when dinner was over, shielding her face from the fire with a feather screen. She put a small billet of wood on the fire with a slender pair of tongs which she was always fond of manipulating, and said :

"Terence, I see there is to be a Drawing-room directly after Christmas, or at latest a few days after the New Year, and I must be presented. I intend to go up to town and to communicate with the proper people. I shall not put up with Peregrine and Everilda, but she shall introduce me. I ought to be presented on your appointment to the bishopric."

"No, really, is that necessary? Will Her Majesty expect it?" the bishop stammered; he was completely taken aback by this disconcerting declaration. It was true he had himself been to Windsor: an announcement to the effect that "The Bishop of Croyland, the Rt. Rev. Terence Garfoyle, D. D., had arrived at the Castle, had been introduced to Her Majesty's presence by the Lord-in-waiting, and did homage on his appointment; the Rt. Hon. A. B——, M. P., being present as Secretary of State," had duly appeared in the public prints; but that his wife had anything to do with his official promotion, or any duties toward Her Majesty resulting from it, was a notion which had not yet entered into the bishop's head.

"Surely, my darling," he nervously articulated, "it cannot matter to Her Majesty whether she sees you or not; nor can it be pleasant to you to incur so much expense and trouble for nothing. For myself, I must remain here. I am far too busy to dance attendance upon Court ceremonials."

"Oh, dear, no!" she replied; "you are not expected to come up to town to look after me. I am thinking of going to-morrow. The miner upstairs is doing all right. I need a change of scene,

and I feel I must have it at once. Bruce will go with me ; you must make shift with Shadrach for a while. Have him in to sing to you as you used to do."

"Is it not a pity to take Bruce away from his tutor and his studies?" he suggested.

"Not at all," she replied ; "he is the wine of life to me. You have just been out for a run, inspecting parsonage-houses, preaching in village pulpits, and holding confirmations, or whatever things a bishop plays at when he has a fortnight out ; now it is my turn. I shall take Pye, and put up at Gridley's Hotel. I shall be all right there, and Peregrine and Everilda are in town, so this is a good opportunity."

Hitherto Victoria had felt quite good and happy. None of the little artifices which she was prone to use to get her own way hurt her conscience ; she considered them all to be rendered requisite, excusable, or meritorious by the bishop's professional prejudices and undoubted eccentricities of character. She was making him a most excellent wife. She had bathed and rejuvenated him in a flood of matrimonial bliss. She had conducted his establishment with cheerfulness and signal success. She had rendered herself popular in the neighborhood and admired in society, while remaining a devoted and careful mother to her boy, and a perfectly charming companion to himself. She had not flirted once ; not even when Brabazon-Farnaby came down to buy those horses. Everyone knows how nice it is to feel very good and to be very much beloved, and up till now this had been Victoria's happy fate ; but somehow it had begun to pall. She was tired of it ; she felt irritable and out of sorts, and more than half inclined to pick a quarrel, for the sake of the excitement of it, with her too monotonously loving lord. She had been debating inwardly between being presented at Court and going to the dentist's, and had selected the former for obvious reasons.

On hearing her abrupt announcement, Dr. Garfoyle was silent. Concern might be read in every line of his fine countenance ; its expression was simply pathetic.

"Pray reconsider your decision as regards our boy, Victoria," he presently said. "At least leave me Bruce ; it will be better for the boy than taking him to a London hotel ; he has had too much of

that sort of life ; it will wofully interrupt his studies, his tutor and I shall be poor company each for the other ; he is so happy here with Shadrach to share his out-door games ; and I suppose you would be gone a fortnight at most, and I should hold him as a hostage."

He smiled persuasively, but Victoria flushed with sudden anger.

"So you consider Shadrach, your housekeeper's son, a fit companion for my boy ! for Bruce, with his sparkling intelligence, his beauty, and his inbred habit of command. Can you not hear the difference between the resonance and purity of his intonations and the detestable twang of that vulgar lad ? Is it not plain to you that he inherits gifts and qualities of mind from a long race of ancestors, both on his father's side and mine, whose powers always kept them in the front and made them certain to control and direct their fellows ? His own father may have been unfortunate, and I may be but a colonial mother in your insular judgment, but you must at least be able to recognize that, with no trace of self-assertion, my boy possesses the quiet assumption of superiority of one meant to rank with all that is best and noblest in the land ; and you calmly select for his companion your servant's son !"

It was the first time that Victoria had attacked her husband, and unluckily she had chosen a subject which he felt to possess the importance of a vital principle. He grew significantly serious, and enquired almost sternly:

"Have you forgotten Italy, Victoria, and what Bruce owes to this same boy ? He gave him life."

"'He gave him life, he gave him death,' " Victoria chanted suddenly. "Have you never heard it said that the two go together ? You may be unaware of what I tell you, but that man upstairs, that miner—who by the way is either mad or a prophet—sent for me to-day, and warned me solemnly against any longer sanctioning the intimacy I complain of. You know what he is like—his eyes quite wild, his manner that of a lunatic, or of a seer. That he had even seen the boys I did not know ; nor can I learn that Bruce has ever been up to his room, though Shadrach's low-bred curiosity may no doubt have taken him there ; yet when I paid the man my daily visit, he urged on me to separate my boy from

that other. 'He gave him life, he gave him death'; the words were his. Folly it may be, but I have been warned."

"The man's brain is affected; he has upset your nerves—that groping in the darkness of night in a strange pit between two explosions, expecting death every moment, has unhinged his reason. Do not visit him again, my love, and for pity's sake forget his ravings. Leave him to the trained nurse whom I have engaged. But about the association of Bruce with Shadrach, hear me a moment, with your wonted reasonableness. It strikes me forcibly that the gifts which Shadrach can bring your boy far exceed those which Bruce has it in his power to divide with him. Your boy may give to Shadrach—or to a succession of Shadrachs—what? Possibly better food than they would eat at home; possibly better clothes or even better instruction (though this latter is doubtful in these days of popular education); in return for these paltry common goods, what has the vulgar lad brought to your child? Health and strength, keen interest in life; the power of happy laughter, the doubling of enjoyment by the contagion of youthful energies. The rich boy gives the poor the purchase of his pence or of his pounds, the other gives himself; the very elixir of his buoyant life, the exuberance of his ardent, simple nature. Believe me, my wife, that, if indeed the debtor and creditor account is to be balanced, you must throw your boy's life into the scales, and then tell me how it stands!"

Victoria was silent and looked perfectly unconvinced. Manlike, her husband went on speaking, as though conviction ever came to woman yet by the stoning of inclination by argument. He entreated her to consider what the hands deserved which were stretched out to secure good for their own children, to protect their own children alone from the chances and risks which befell others; to place them apart and to teach them to think of themselves as something superior and different to those around them.

"The day will surely come when all these artificial barriers which you raise around your children must be thrown down," he added; "and then you send forth into the world beings with hearts closed against the just claims of others; beings taught to consider themselves and their families something quite different to all the rest of mankind, richer, or better born, or more carefully brought

up. It matters nothing what the gas has been by which the family balloon has been inflated ; there is little or nothing to choose between one poisonous gas of human selfishness and another. Do you see, Victoria ?”

“No, I do not see, I hear. It will do for an address to parents on your next parochial visitation,” said Victoria with a little yawn.

“Well, and you shall help me preach it by example, my sweet wife, to every vicarage in this diocese,” Dr. Garfoyle exclaimed warmly, possessing himself of her indifferent fingers. “Above everything, teach your child from the very beginning to hold out helping hands to every little comrade ; to see in every other child a possible brother or sister ; so that when the day comes in which he goes forth into a world articulate with the groans of humanity, he may stand as a brother among men and women ; as one who recognizes no artificial barricades of man’s erection, but who knows himself a denizen of his Father’s earth, surrounded by his Father’s children, whose rights are his rights, and whose claims are his own care. Until their purer hearts are warped and poisoned by our prejudices, children delight in a community of life with each other ; to share is as natural to them as to breathe, until we teach them ‘This is yours, this is not your neighbor’s.’ Let us at least prove it, Victoria. It is not a narrow question, in the present state of society it is one of vital importance that our children should go forth furnished with this truly hospitable spirit ; that each one should be prepared to walk the earth truly as a brother among brothers. The whole fabric of society may in a few short decades, or even less, depend upon whether or not they have successfully imbibed this principle. Upon the education which their mothers give them, while they are still boys and girls, the solution of every social problem hangs.”

“The line must be drawn somewhere,” said Victoria moodily.

“Pray draw it at the universe then,” exclaimed her husband warmly. “You have no right to assign it narrower limits ; make it so wide that you cannot see it, draw a girdle round the earth and sea ; that will do for the present ; you may have to include some other planets by and by.”

“And all this,” said Victoria, “grew out of my telling you that

I meant to go to London to-morrow, and to take Bruce with me."

"Forgive me, my darling," he said penitently. "You started me on a favorite theme. But must you really go?"

Then Victoria rose impatiently.

"Do you suppose," she said, "that I am utterly devoid of feeling? Do you imagine that I can stay here and endure indefinitely all that I have been expected to go through of late? Do you imagine that funerals with a ghastly row of coffins in front of me, and weeping widows on either side, suit me? That I like my clothing wet with blood and tears? Do you imagine that I have no nerves, as my sister-in-law would doubtless inform you? that the words of the funeral service and the sound of the dismal anthems which were sung at the graves are not still ringing in my ears? For what do you take me?"

"For a saint, or an angel, or, better still, for a most heroic woman with a noble and courageous soul," he said, getting up from his seat, and kneeling before her.

Victoria brightened; she had relieved her feelings by all that she had said; she had got her own way, and she felt happier and more leniently disposed toward her husband since she was to make her escape on the following day.

"Shall I tell you what I know I am," she answered, smiling once more, throwing back her pretty head with a bewitching gesture, and glancing down upon him provokingly as he still knelt in rapture at her feet. "Women such as I am do not wear well as wives; we are such stuff as sirens were supposed to be made of, who lured honest men to their destruction. Your lawn sleeves, my lord, have enfolded no saint such as you imagine, but simply a bundle of feminine contradiction."

"Perhaps I am the best judge of what I have gained," he answered serenely.

"It may be so," she said; "but, after all, I never think long about myself, but take myself and other people as they come and as they go; only, if you will force the deadly vice of modern self-consciousness upon me by the introspective forms of your faith, I can easily tell you that I am a woman whose spirits are often as light as gossamer while her heart is as heavy as lead; and further,

that I am a mother whose passionate love of her child has rendered her victorious over death and anguish ; moreover, that I detest monotony and that I loathe penury."

"Where do I come in, my darling wife?" he asked, bending tenderly down to kiss her hands.

"Oh, you come in on Sundays, in a church service, as long as you please me, Terence."

"Ah, my love, do not jest," he said gravely, rising from his position at her feet. "Life is too serious for sham joy, or assumed sorrow."

"All the truth there is in life lies hidden beneath its shams," she said. "Wisdom waits upon you now, my lord, in the garb of folly. She is peeping at you at this moment from beneath her cloak of motley ; you will recognize her footsteps when they are no longer heard in your house. If in this life it is true that all realizations are for him who waits, it is equally true that all that comes, comes too late. See; I have a present for you. I ordered it up in town, and I have had it specially engraved ;" and she produced a small jeweller's box, wherein was a handsome ring in which a sard was set, which was engraven with two words only. They were these : "Too late." "Will you wear it for my sake while I am absent?" she said, slipping it on his finger, which through a lifetime had been hitherto unadorned by jewelled ornament.

"I will wear it for your sake," he answered gravely. "I admire the beauty of the stone, and I admire your taste in choosing it, but I shall always wish that you had not allowed your spirit of contradiction to influence you in your choice of a motto ; still, it is characteristic of you, my beloved, and, as all that is yours is mine, I accept thankfully even your contradictions, and this ring with them."

"It would be better to beat me for them," she rejoined.

"But must you go? We have hardly been four months married. I had hoped that you would not have left me for a year and a day, and now you go and take Bruce with you."

Of course she went. He felt that she was ill, that all this dismal scene had been too much for her sensitive nerves. He had hoped to prevail upon her to stay, but he resigned himself to suffer for her sake. To be sympathetically affected by her sorrows was to

taste the joy of bringing her consolation. To vibrate sorrowfully with her in her failings was to learn the lesson of the mediator ; the price that must be paid for the privilege of intimate human association was the purchase of the joy and glory of the lover's union. What was all this, in fine, but to enter more deeply into the comprehension of the communion of spirits, which could not be known save by sharing the miseries of sinners. And, after all, the bishop was very busy, as busy as a bishop must be in these modern days. No need to enumerate his engrossing occupations, everybody knows them ; and, after all, Victoria would come back all the better for the change, and all would go on well as before ; so he mused and hoped and trusted.

"The dear bishop is so apostolic, he really should never have married," said one of the disaffected clergymen's wives to another, about this period. "Have you heard that Mrs. Garfoyle has positively left him alone already, and that she has gone up to town to be presented at Court?"

"He always does remind me so of St. Paul," said the lady addressed, and she spoke as though she had quite recently enjoyed the privilege of an intimate personal acquaintance with the apostle to the Gentiles.

CHAPTER XXI

TO SEE THE QUEEN

ON Christmas Eve Dr. Garfoyle sat over his study fire alone. When he had married, in the previous July, he had pictured a very different Christmas to himself : a Christmas which should have seen him at least in possession of a complete home circle of his own ; whereon his fireside should have been brightened by Bruce's delicious mirth, and beautified by Victoria's radiant presence. But now he was absolutely solitary. The weather was extremely rough, the wind moaned outside, rain was falling in torrents ; no other sound was heard save the raging of the tempest, which seemed to increase in violence every hour. A hurricane was driving hard over land and sea, and in its thunders every other

sound or voice was lost. The room was in semi-darkness ; for after a hard day's work the bishop was permitting himself a brief interval of repose before he turned to the many other pressing matters awaiting his attention.

Victoria and her boy were still up in town ; but as the Queen's Drawing-room was to be held on Tuesday the very last day of this the last month of the Old Year, Dr. Garfoyle was living in hopes of their returning without fail immediately after the anticipated ceremony. They had already been gone three weeks, and true to his conviction of duty, he had not even allowed himself the relaxation of running up to town to visit them, during the interval. He had so lately entered upon the work of the diocese that he could not afford to be absent. The habits of self-discipline which had so long distinguished him still governed his actions.

The storm increased : a stack of chimneys fell with a sound like a thunder-bolt in some distant part of the dwelling ; and streams of water began to pour through the ceiling of the room in which the bishop sat, where above the great bow-window the tiles had been stripped from the roof. The bishop rose to reconnoitre ; but at that instant another summons broke in upon his anxious revery. It came from a hospital nurse, the one who had charge of the unfortunate miner who still lingered in a distant chamber up above. His injuries had apparently been slighter than those of many, but his brain had never recovered from the shock. Most of the men who had been injured in the explosion had so far recovered that they had returned to their work ; the graves of the dead were decorated weekly with flowers or boughs of green by the women who held them in affectionate remembrance, and the pit was again in working order, but the strange man whom the bishop had taken in still languished on the bed to which he had at first been carried. One complication had followed another, baffling medical skill ; brain-fever had supervened, and now the end was rapidly approaching.

"Will you come, my lord ?" the woman said ; "he has been mostly delirious all day. He is sensible now, but sinking fast. The doctor has just gone. He says that he is not likely to last an hour ; he is calling for you, sir. At the rate at which he is going on, he will wear himself out in a few minutes."

"Have you ascertained that he has really no relations to send for?" Dr. Garfoyle asked.

The nurse shook her head.

"None that he wishes to see," she replied.

Dr. Garfoyle rose immediately and followed her up the stairs; at the door of a distant room she paused. The candle which she carried was extinguished by the wind which smote down upon them through a broken skylight, and the rain poured in in torrents.

"Leave me," the bishop said; "I would rather be alone with him now."

"You will take care he does not try to get up, my lord?" she said with professional caution; "they are awfully strong just at the last, when their brains are in that excited condition."

The bishop bowed his head in assent, and entered the feebly lighted room.

Dr. Garfoyle had already discovered that his strange patient had the temperament of a religious enthusiast. He had learned that the man had been a class-leader in a narrow community of Methodists in a distant part of the country, among a mining population. The scene of his ministrations had been in the dark depths of the collieries in which he had worked. He had collected the men around him by the light of their lanterns during their spare hour for dinner, or had addressed the loungers by the pit-bank on Sundays. His thin spare frame, gaunt haggard face, and penetrating eyes fronted the bishop as he stepped across the floor. The man's head was remarkable, his aspect wild and fierce. He was unshaven and his black hair was long, his eyes looked as though they pierced through the solid walls of matter which surrounded him, and they shone with a strange consuming fire. "Fanatic" was written on every line of his countenance. He raised his hands with a gesture of authority as Dr. Garfoyle approached the bed.

"Bishop! my lord!" he shouted, in a voice which might well have carried words of warning to his comrades as it rang along the galleries of the mine, "I have sent for you! I have a message to you! My soul is already well-nigh delivered; it is walking on the wings of the wind, poised above time and place. My eyes already see farther than your sight can reach, my ears hear words that were never uttered in mortal ears! I see the sins of men and women,

crawling and creeping on the earth, vile, slimy monsters poisoning them with their deadly venom, and leaving them to drop down into destruction. I see all the high places of the earth brought low, all the great ones diminished."

"Calm yourself, my friend," said Dr. Garfoyle, laying his own hand with a calm, strong pressure upon the bed coverings.

The dying man gasped for breath, seemed revived by the bishop's touch as by a fresh spring breeze, and, after a restful pause, continued in a quieter tone of voice :

"Bishop, it was to the miners that Christ went when he 'descended into hell' to visit 'the spirits in prison.' He, too, trod the bowels of the earth ! In the mines I have met Him. When I descended into the darkness, I found that He was there also; when I was buried alive there, He talked with me, face to face, as a man speaks with his brother. There He too was black, yet comely."

"Forget the darkness now, my friend. He who has been 'lifted up' draws you up unto Himself, into His light."

There was a moment's pause of exhaustion. The miner's failing breath came and went with painful rapidity. The imagery of Scripture alone had, it was evident, provided dramatic expression for this untutored but poetic nature, as is so often the case with such unlettered prophets.

Presently he spoke again, more feebly :

"I am in the light now; I am in a beautiful dwelling-place. Your palace walls are wonderful, my lord, they are made of precious stones, the onyx and the chrysoprase are there, the sardius and the jacinth ; but listen, this is what I see : All over the shining surface of the jewelled walls I read these words, cut and engraven in the stone, and set with gold, 'Too late ! Too late !'"

The bishop started; on the finger of the hand with which he laid a firm pressure on the sufferer's hand upon the bed shone Victoria's ring, with its enigmatical inscription ; but he would have held it impossible that the miner's eyes could have deciphered the minute old English characters in which the words were cut, had they not, moreover, been engraved upon the under side and not upon the surface of the ring.

Dr. Garfoyle was, however, never superstitiously inclined; he noted it as a passing coincidence, and paid no more heed to the

words. But the dying man continued again, with a change of dramatic expression, in so far as the aid of corporeal expression could be permitted to one unable to raise himself up. This time he was evidently in imagination again in the mine. Yet his thoughts took shape in great measure also from the circumstances immediately surrounding him.

The storm was raging still, the rain deluging the passage outside his door through the skylight, broken by falling tiles ; to his fancy all this suggested that the mine was being flooded, but with a rapid change he turned to Dr. Garfoyle.

"Bishop," he said, "your walls are sinking in, your house is undermined; wherever you place your foot the water rises beneath your tread; the floodgates of heaven are opened, your ark is no place of safety, the waters roar beneath it. Death and destruction are abroad. Death takes me with the Old Year ; it will re-enter your dwelling when you least look for it. Its return is not far off. I see it ! I know it to be not mine only."

Again there was silence; the dying man's eyes closed, and Dr. Garfoyle, feeling that the end was rapidly approaching, raised his clear, calm voice in consolatory utterances, or words of invocation, couched in the old biblical language which was the only speech of the miner's soul.

Once more the dying man's eyes unclosed; this time they were fixed in a long and tender gaze of pathetic affection and penetrating sympathy upon Dr. Garfoyle's face.

"Dear brother," he said, clasping the bishop's hand in both his own, "remember in the days to come that I shall repay your care ; remember that I wait for the child that I may guard him for you—that I shall keep him safely for you till you come for him again. The time will be short. And give my message to my mates down below; tell them—He descended into Hades, the place of darkness, the pit. In the darkness of the mine I saw Him, I met Him. Tell them He knows the miners, He knows them. He chooses them—and me !"

When Dr. Garfoyle left the room he had himself closed the sightless eyes and composed the worn-out body, and upon his own face there shone only the light of a serene exaltation.

The miner was buried by the bishop himself on the following

Saturday. The funeral sermon was also preached by him, not in the cathedral church, but in the little tin tabernacle set up in the midst of the mining district; but the bishop felt himself to be but the medium by whose lips the departed man delivered his own message to his brethren.

Of the other sentences which fell from those dying lips Dr. Garfoyle never spoke to any human being. They were to be dismissed as the wanderings of a weakened brain, not to be dwelt upon by any wise man; or if indeed the suggestion which prompted them was to be sought, it was easy to imagine that the constantly expected death of the woman Pettit, whose room was next to that which had been occupied by the miner, was in itself sufficient to have dictated his wild words. At the same time, Dr. Garfoyle recognized that it was not without the limits of his experience that the perceptions of one already on the verge of deliverance from mortal bonds should fasten upon things beyond his own present apprehension. Therefore he buried the matter in the lucid depths of his own thought, unforgotten there to lie, but never to be permitted to rise to the surface.

The miner had died on Christmas Eve. On Saturday, the 28th, he was buried. On the 29th, Sunday, the bishop addressed the pit people, who crowded to hear him, mindful of his recent devotion to their welfare, and of his sympathy with their misfortunes. And on the 31st he went up to town. That afternoon Victoria was to appear at the Drawing-room; on the following Sunday the bishop was to preach at St. Paul's, and he had various other engagements which would positively necessitate his presence in town up to about the seventh or eighth day of the month; the moment that these were over he hoped to return home with Victoria and Bruce.

Dr. Garfoyle's business was greatly due to the embarrassed condition of his finances, owing to the enormous sums which his wife had disbursed. He found it would be absolutely necessary for him, if he was to clear up all liabilities, and to start afresh with their return home in the New Year, to convert the greater part of his private fortune into available funds. He was prepared to take this step, and had made arrangements to carry it into effect during his stay in town. He could not breathe with the millstone of debt which his wife had hung about his neck. He had deliberately deter-

mined to rid himself of it by taking heroic and immediate measures ; but, once cleared, he had adopted an absolute and irrevocable decision that, come what might, he would never again be overtaken by a similar contingency. To permit such a continued line of action would, in his estimate, have been in himself a greater sin than in Victoria. She must submit to his will in the matter, and she should. How, exactly, he was going to compel her acquiescence he might not have been able to say as yet; he must clear up all old and outstanding scores first—his man of business had been communicated with to that effect; afterward, he must make Victoria comprehend that he intended to be obeyed. His wife was so incalculable, she was so charmingly impromptu in all her actions, that it saved him the trouble of thinking beforehand what he was to say, or how he was to set about it, because it was obviously futile to invent conversations when you can have no conception of the motives which are likely to govern the other party's replies. Dr. Garfoyle was aware that, owing to his consistency, the movements of his own mind might well prove monotonous ; he was equally sensible of the element of attraction in the unexpectedness of his wife's mental processes. Another sort of man might have been irritated by this characteristic in his wife, to Dr. Garfoyle it still offered the charm of novelty; moreover, it saved time and trouble in pre-consideration, and forced a corresponding originality upon the time-worn husband personally.

Victoria should return with him and with her boy, within a week, to Croyland; Victoria should submit to his dictation in matters of expenditure and display ; upon these two points the bishop had come to an irrevocable decision.

On Tuesday Dr. Garfoyle went up to town, and the joy of anticipation went with him. At last he found himself actually on his way to join his wife and her darling boy. He was yearning to fold them both in his arms. He seemed to himself to have lived with the thought of this hour of reunion never out of his thoughts since Victoria had left him.

When he reached the hotel his pulses were agitated as no scene of tragic significance had had power to agitate them. When he entered the drawing-room, which, although an hotel room, Victoria had impressed, as she did every place she inhabited,

entirely with the influence of her own personality, he found Bruce eagerly waiting for him upon the threshold. The boy sprang into his arms.

"Oh, father, I am so glad! I am quite mad with joy because you are come. I have come to the 'collusion' that we sha'n't never go away from you any more."

"Where is your mother, my darling boy?"

"She is dressing, father. She is awfully grand, but the Queen will let you put so little on when you go to see her that I'm sure she will catch cold."

At this moment Pye put in her head.

"Mrs. Garfoyle would like to see you, my lord, if you will come into the next room. The temperature of this drawing-room is so low that she dare not come in here."

At this remark Bruce's bright little face sparkled with fun in every line.

"If that is all I'll soon get it up, you can tell mother;" then, seizing the thermometer which Mrs. Pye had dismally consulted, and snatching up a fat lazy cat belonging to the house, which lay upon the foot of the sofa, he placed the thermometer beneath her and carefully covered up both with a fur cloak.

"Now, father," he said, as the bishop vanished, "you can tell mother to come in here and show herself as soon as she likes; the cat and the thermometer between them will soon get up the right temperature."

Victoria received her husband, standing in a magnificent court-dress, at the end of a vast room. Two women with pins in their mouths knelt at her feet on the floor. A hair-dresser was putting up his apparatus in the dressing-room; and Mrs. Pye stood, as Bruce said, by the table, "looking consulted." It was splendid, but chilling; nevertheless, her smile was sweet enough to convey a million meanings, and though he could not approach the lovely picture, he could promise himself a postponed enjoyment of its perfections. He noted that Victoria was looking brilliantly young and fresh, and consoled himself by the assurance that there could be now no possible cause for her requiring any remedial absence from home. She blew him a tiny kiss with the tips of her gloved fingers, weighted with a yet more delicious smile; he stumbled

over the hair-dresser on the threshold of the apartment, and returned to the drawing-room to receive Lady Peregrine Goldenour, equally magnificent and entirely unattractive, save—it was to be hoped—to her own lord and master, who scrambled in after her, holding up her train for her. Then the two ladies and Sir Peregrine departed, and the bishop observed, as he assisted at their installation in their carriage, that it was his own, or that it was, at any rate, the one which had been his own. He noted that it was completely renovated; remembered that Victoria had requested him to send it up to town for her sister-in-law's use; and hopefully concluded that, after all, the purchase had been suitably arranged. Then he returned to pass the intervening hours between his wife's departure and return in the company of the boy whom he so loved.

His wife's absence was long, and Dr. Garfoyle had abundant leisure to notice that Bruce had lost flesh and color in town; nor was the child long in confiding to his step-father's sympathetic ears his longing to return to the freedom of his home.

"There's nothing to do here, father, but to be shut up in a bedroom with Pye while mother is out, and I've outgrown Pye; I should think anyone would by when they were in their ninth year. She expects me to count how many four-wheelers and hansoms go by in an hour; now, can she want to know that? When I come home I'm going to learn to ride. Mr. Farnaby has bought me a pony, because mamma couldn't go to the stables where it was living. It's going to be sent down to-morrow, and I shall give Shadrach turns too; he says his father had six horses, besides a donkey and a lot of cows, so he was ever so much richer than mine, Mrs. Pye says."

The boy was still running on with happy chatter, seated on the arm of the bishop's chair, when soon after seven o'clock the two ladies and Sir Peregrine returned. They came in talking eagerly, and Victoria was gay and excited. The bishop had fondly imagined that they would have dined together, and that thus they might have spent the hours of the departing year, and the first moments of the new one. He had even trusted that his wife might not be too fatigued to spend the last hour of this their first year together by his side at the midnight service, in some neighboring church. It seemed that he was to be again disappointed.

Sir Peregrine and Lady Goldenour had been invited to remain to an eight o'clock dinner; two or three other guests were expected by Victoria, and Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, who was still (or was it again?) in town among them, was of that number.

"Would the Sultan never claim that man?" Lady Peregrine had already enquired of her husband, "or did he always let him go? It was unheard-of!"

However, there he was. And after the dinner was over it appeared that all the little party present, except the bishop himself, were to adjourn to a friend's house for a ball, where they were to dance the old year out and the new one in, in company.

Dr. Garfoyle was surprised and disconcerted. Victoria had long known that he was coming on that day; could she not have consulted his pleasure as well as her own? He was seeking the kindly excuse which invariably followed question of her conduct in his mind, when she sent for him to her room, where she and Pye together were changing her court-dress for one more convenient for a dance. She told him hastily that, as she could not hope to get away till four in the morning, and as she should be with the Peregrine Goldenours, she had arranged to return to their house to sleep.

"I have never left Bruce for a single night since we came up to town, it makes him so happy to sleep in my room," she explained; "but now that you are here you will take care of him, and I can go off quite at ease about him. There he is, you see, in his little bed in the corner fast asleep already, dear child. But in six or seven days," she added, with a lovely smile which atoned to him for much, "we will all go home together. Shall we not be happy?"

"I hope so," he answered briefly, in acknowledgment of this sugar-plum.

What could he say more? For Pye appeared to be attached to her lady by pins, fastened by combs, and united by artificial flowers. Moreover Victoria was late, Everilda Goldenour and her husband were calling impatiently, and the rest of the party were displaying civil annoyance at the delay.

The bishop sat alone over the drawing-room fire. Bruce was sleeping in the next room. Presently his meditations were interrupted by a discreet knock at the door, and the manager of the

hotel entered with an apology. Relaxing his features by a stiff smile he laid before the bishop a sheaf of papers which, he explained, contained a record of Mrs. Garfoyle's account with the establishment. Gridley's was not a company, as is the case nowadays with most big hotels, but a well-known, highly select, and most expensive resort for people who were all that they should be. The position which Gridley's held was rather comparable to that of the family banker ; and, true to their reputation, it seemed that they had permitted Mrs. Garfoyle to run up as long an account as she chose, on the score of the bishop's position, not only for the ordinary expenses of board and lodging, but also in respect of very considerable sums disbursed by them on her personal responsibility.

"Under the circumstances," the manager explained, "the Bureau had indeed been happy to consult Mrs. Garfoyle's convenience ; but she had requested them, now that his lordship had come up to town, to lay these documents before him." Having thus delivered himself of this carefully prepared speech, the polite gentleman of the hotel bowed and withdrew, leaving Dr. Garfoyle to digest the paper feast spread before him as best he might.

The next two hours were spent by the bishop in a state of ever-growing astonishment and dismay. His education was certainly progressing rapidly. He had no doubt heard, or had read in newspaper reports and other sources of miscellaneous information, of ladies who could dance through fortunes just as men might wager estates at the gaming-table or squander thousands upon racing events ; but he had always had too much to do to attend to this particular development of human weakness. The person—be it man or woman—who perpetrated such follies, he had, moreover, never expected to meet in the society which he was in the habit of frequenting. Now and then, it is true, it had been Dr. Garfoyle's fate as a college dean or lecturer to come across some half-fledged youth, stories of whose mad extravagance were circulated among the authorities at college meetings ; but then the young fellow had speedily had to droop his silly head and to disappear as he had come.

Older men, too, he could easily recall, who had stupidly or viciously muddled away comfortable fortunes ; but a woman who danced through thousands as children dance on the edge of sea

waves, splashing the water to right and to left, merely to make it fly, from sheer love of enjoyment, or heightening of sensation, he had scarcely expected to discover among the decorous wives and maidens of his social set. Yet here was his own wife flinging money away in utter lavishness of spending, for the mere love of buying, simply in order to gratify the passion of possession. The very room in which he sat bore evidence against her. In his eyes it almost resembled a bazaar, so full was it of objects of taste, of meretricious value. For the brief time that she was to occupy it, it appeared, from the accounts before him, that Victoria had actually refurnished it with curtains, tapestries, carpets, and lounges ; not to mention the ornaments displayed on every side. The same had also been done in her other rooms ; and as to the flowers she had ordered, as Dr. Garfoyle glanced at the items of the florist's bill he reflected that no more artificial product need be sought on earth than these natural gifts of summer and of sunshine, when misrepresented by the costly productions of the florist's establishment. What an abuse of the good gifts of Heaven was here in this degradation of lovely blossoms to the service of vanity and folly. Then there was a really remarkable confectioner's account for fondants, bon-bons, and gateaux of every description ; things with the most modern French designations such as one must be either a Parisian of the hour, or a professed artist in sugar, to be able so much as to decipher. Was it possible that Bruce had really been fed upon all these extortionate dainties ? No wonder he looked much the worse for the regimen !

Victoria had certainly provided a pleasant welcome and a charming occupation for her devoted husband in the consideration of these precious documents. They might almost be regarded as her diary, so minutely did they furnish a record of her pursuits and enjoyments since she left home to restore her nerves by change of scene in London society. For a second it struck him to fancy how oddly it would look to see a paragraph in the daily papers announcing that "the Bishop of Croyland would no longer be responsible for his wife's debts." He could not be indignant with one so inexpressibly dear to him, but the strict morality which governed his character forbade him to subordinate what he recognized as an immediate duty to any cowardly reluctance of the affections.

If he could have seen all the convicting bills before him at once, it would have been a great relief to the bishop's mind ; but, in the uncertainty of the precise sum total of Victoria's expenditure, he had not even the distraction of arithmetic to relieve the disturbance of his feelings. The amount represented by his wife's outlay during three weeks' stay at Gridley's would, in his estimation, have been sufficient to maintain the whole establishment at Croyland for a year. He noticed—now that he was forced to a narrow consideration of the subject through the hours of this melancholy evening of the Old Year, with no clerical matters to divert his attention—that Victoria's milliner's bills and other matters of personal expenditure were not included in the sheaf which he held ; and what the amount of those awful documents might be baffled his horrified conjecture. Had he not seen her magnificence when she went to pay her respects to her Sovereign ? Had he not again beheld her whiter but even more wonderful, when, shining and sparkling in satin, laces, and diamonds, she had followed Lady Goldenour down the steps to her carriage and had driven off for the rest of the night ?

In his anxiety to consult her pleasure in all things Dr. Garfoyle had paid what he felt to be a very considerable sum into his banker's, to his wife's account, when she left him for town. His eyes now fell upon her check-book: it was flung carelessly upon the table, as though on purpose to attract his attention ; no need to wait to satisfy himself on that score : the amount had been overdrawn in ten days. To all this must be added, as he privately knew, his own almsgiving both public and private, always the largest sum he disbursed ; and the enormous claims which had had to be met upon his appointment to the bishopric, of which he would touch none of the emoluments till the close of the first year of office.

Poor child, she had been held in so long ! Through all the narrowly restricted years of her widowhood had she not been doled out a grudging and insufficient pittance by her own and her first husband's family ? Was it to be wondered at if, with almost childish joy in the pleasure of what had seemed to her unlimited present wealth, with Bruce's future unexpectedly secured with the assurance of a handsome inheritance, she had cast wisdom to the winds ? Happily, by the sacrifice of his private fortune he could yet retrieve the position ; and, by every duty which he owed to

God and man, she should henceforth be guided by him in this matter !

The bishop had reached the point wherein an august austerity was mingling with an unrestricted tenderness in the thought of Victoria's sweet personality, when all the bells broke forth from all the churches round ; he thrust the papers into a drawer and went out, taking his way to a midnight service. So the husband prayed, the wife danced, and the child slept, while the bells rang another Old Year out and another New Year in.

As the bishop regained his wife's drawing-room the clock struck one, and at that instant the electric lights were extinguished ; but candles had been placed upon the table, evidently in view of that emergency, and the fire yet smouldered in the grate. As he sat down before it, his eye fell upon a scrap of paper lying on the rug at his feet. He thought it must be one of the bills which he had dropped ; but, on picking it up and unfolding it, it proved to be a vulgar production of the ordinary type of anonymous letter directed in an unknown hand to himself ; in which the writer sought to stir up mischief by misrepresenting the visits of Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby to Mrs. Garfoyle during her stay in the hotel. After a moment's consideration Dr. Garfoyle took the thing in the tongs and thrust it into the fire, washed his hands after having inadvertently touched it, and betook himself to rest in Bruce's room.

The sight of the boy's pure face and lovely brow, as he lay sleeping upon his pillow, imaged for him the brightness of the Eternal Child. And praying inly, as he blessed and kissed the boy, for that perfect harmony of spirit which the discords of the outer life might seek to disturb in vain, his uplifted soul gathered down upon itself the strength of a flawless serenity. Escaping thus from the fatigues of an outer world agitated by the distractions of change and chance, the bishop thus had access to an ideal state, postponed to no distant paradise, but realized immediately as a present and limitless expansion of personal fruition in an ever-growing union with the Divine Spirit.

CHAPTER XXII

AN UNEXPECTED MOVE

VICTORIA GARFOYLE had distinctly told her husband that it would not be of the least use for him to call for her at Sir Peregrine Goldenour's on the morning after the ball—New Year's Day. She declared that she should be so fatigued from all her exertions on the previous day that she should certainly be extremely late in getting up; but to console him she had promised to return to the hotel at latest by two o'clock. Until he had seen her, and had poured out all that he had in his mind and heart to her, Dr. Garfoyle felt quite unable to devote his attention to any of the business which awaited him. The critical interview with her must take place first. What if she refused to hear him? Yet in spite of this recurring suggestion, he found himself counting the hours like a schoolboy, so anxious was he for the moment when the joy of her return should take the place of the night of his deprivation. Moreover, it was Saturday, and the 1st of January and a public holiday, so that he could scarcely have done his business had he been so minded. Mentally he postponed it to Monday, since he was to preach at St. Paul's on the Sunday morning. To while away the empty hours and to please the child, he took Bruce to the Zoölogical Gardens, returning only at the time at which he expected to receive Victoria.

But when Dr. Garfoyle re-entered the hotel, he found that a telegram had been waiting for an hour, in which Victoria informed him that she had already started for Croyland by the 10.30 train. With the paper in his hand he turned into his wife's room; there he found the woman Pye—whom he secretly suspected of having indited the anonymous communication of the night before—upon her knees immersed in packing; and the whole room was a scene of disorder and confusion.

"Mrs. Garfoyle was so done up, sir, that she said she could not remain in London. She only slept for three hours, and then had some coffee, and set off in a cab at ten o'clock. She longed to be in the country. She said she needed quiet; but she preferred to send you a telegram herself from the station. She wished me to come here and pack her things, and I was to follow her by an afternoon train—and I was to be sure to enquire did you wish for Master Bruce to stop with you, or to come home with me? She said you would give your instructions as to that."

"I wish Master Bruce to return with you to his mother," said the bishop, with an unshaken dignity baffling to the woman's curiosity.

"Have you no message, my lord, to Mrs. Garfoyle?"

But the bishop left the room, absolutely as though no voice had spoken.

"So his sweet wife's conscience pricked her for her extravagance, and she was afraid to meet him!" That was how he tenderly accounted for her flight.

For a whole week the bishop was forcibly detained in town. He found it, of course, impossible to get his work done in the time he desired. Solicitors and stock-brokers were not easily hurried, and his inclinations counted for nothing. At length he felt that his financial arrangements could be concluded from Croyland, and thither he immediately hastened. During the interval he had written to Victoria letters in which his determination to begin the New Year by an economical readjustment of their way of living plainly showed itself, mingling with words of the warmest affection. Of these letters Victoria took not the slightest notice. Not one line did her longing husband receive from her; he was utterly at a loss to know what to make of it; but Bruce wrote a couple of childish compositions, in which he told of the arrival of the new pony, and reported that his mother was "quite well," and dwelt upon his joy in returning to his home.

Croyland Court, the bishop's dwelling, was a fine stone-built mansion standing in wooded grounds upon the slope of the hill on which the cathedral had been admirably placed; as a site, its position was nearly perfect. The bishop's mansion and the solidly built houses of other church dignitaries were grouped on the side

of Croyland hill, just below the level of the cathedral. Behind, in the distance, rose other and higher ranges of hills; beneath them the houses of the town sent their smoke upward, and were packed more and more closely together till, at the bottom of the valley, a small river, Croyle, pursued its track to the sea. The most busy and populous part of the manufacturing centre lay half-concealed in the valley; while the pit villages were at a distance of some three or four miles from the town.

When the boy Bruce first beheld the stately home to which he was brought, it took possession of his childish fancy as grand enough to have grown out of a fairy-tale. He realized that there was something about his new home, though he could not have told what it was, which distinguished it from every home which he had ever owned before; even from the beautiful haunts which his mother used to frequent in the south of France. As he roamed, with Shadrach for a companion, through the gardens, the parklike meadows, and wooded enclosures which immediately surrounded Croyland Court, during all the later days of the summer and autumn of the year which had just run out its course; as he learned to climb the hills, and to manage his boat on the river, the boy grew to love the place well. He had a tender, inborn passion for nature in his guileless heart, which led him keenly to rejoice in all her varying sights and sounds; and when he and Shadrach had done running races and climbing trees, pursuing insects, birds, or blossoms, or disporting themselves in boyish fashion over the soft lawns of their new playground, Bruce would stretch himself upon the turf, looking up at the distant range of undulating hills, and put his fair head sideways, so as to see the brilliant coloring, or the hazy outlines of the landscape from a different angle of vision, in order thus to restore the freshness of impression impaired by daily observation. He never wearied of the view either of the house and grounds or of the distant country; the shadows which flitted over the ivy-grown walls of the gray stone house varied from hour to hour of the day. The clouds that chased each other across the sky, and sometimes came down upon the hill-tops, were never alike, and the sunshine never dispersed them twice in the same fantastic forms, but lighted up the whole country with ever varying smiles. In the early morning hours the land would be wrapped in silvery

mist; later on the air became so thin and clear that the boy's keen eyesight could detect the distant points of light where the shafts of rising sunlight caught the tiny panes of glass in the windows of some shepherd's hut upon the hills, making them flash back lights like signals to watching eyes below. Bruce never wearied of gazing at his beautiful home, and already in six short months he had grown to love it with a love mixed with awe and wonder, and mingled with the strange feeling that every tree and flower and blade of grass had an individual personality of its own, a fraction of conscious life which it shared with his.

On the day on which Dr. Garfoyle was to return all the distance was bathed in bright wintry sunshine, the air was crisp with snow crystals, and was even more transparent than usual, for the direction of the wind carried the smoke of Croyland in the opposite direction. The wintry sunbeams lit up sparkling masses of pure white snow, supported by the outspread arms of four majestic cedar-trees which stood upon the lawn, fronting the picturesque pile of building. Bruce ran down to the lower lodge, and climbing into the cab which brought his step-father, drove up to the front entrance with him.

Victoria came out beneath the portico to greet her husband and son. But what was the change in her? She was clad in clinging black robes; there was not an atom of color visible anywhere about her, her white collar and cuffs demurely outlined the slender proportions of her elegant figure, and the only ornament to be seen upon the black expanse of her robe was a large cross in beaten silver, which hung by a silver chain at her side; in her hand she carried a black worsted stocking of Bruce's, which she was apparently darning. No servants came to the door to receive him; the cabman was directed by Mrs. Garfoyle to bring in the things, was paid and dismissed. Holding out her hands to her boy Victoria danced with him all about the hall, by a series of graceful evolutions evading her husband's proffered salute; laughingly she retreated till she reached the door of the morning-room. There she disappeared with Bruce, but the bishop followed them, and found that she had apparently taken possession of the room for her own special occupation. He was surprised to see that all the *bric-à-brac* which had lately filled it had vanished. At present its

arrangements were severe in their simplicity. A sewing-machine stood upon the table, and a suit of Bruce's, half cut out, betrayed his wife's apparent occupation when disturbed by his arrival. He also noticed that the pictures with which she had lavishly adorned the walls had given place to lithographs, or inexpensive prints of religious subjects from galleries of foreign art, or of the Arundel Society's publications.

"Bruce," his mother now said, addressing the boy, "run away to the housekeeper's room; Shadrach is waiting for you there, he has something to show you—I've not the least notion that he has," she said, speaking for the first time to her husband; "but one boy always has something to show another, so it will do for an excuse. Pray, Mr. Bishop, is this right, now?" she said, stepping back and indicating by a pretty gesture first the room and then her own novel investiture. "Now, am I good? Now, am I proper? Now, am I doing my duty in 'that state and condition, etc., to which it has pleased you to call me?' Is this how you admire me? Sevenpence a yard was the precise cost of this black serge gown. See, I wear no ornaments, and this cross is not even of gold. I am thinking of becoming a Roman Catholic: I've often thought of it before. Look at the socks I am knitting, will you appropriate them? How many bishops' wives, do you suppose, are capable of cutting out and making suits for their own big boys of eight, and finishing them in true tailor style?" (As a matter of fact they were not finished, and Victoria had commenced them a year and a half ago, when she was living in lodgings; but as a statement for effect it was true enough, no doubt she could have done it had she wished.) The bishop tried to interpose the embrace for which he was waiting; but she would not permit it. "No," she said, "I will not allow it, and you shall not utter a word till you have heard what I have to say. There is no need for you to speak; everything that you wished is done already. You determined that I should be reformed, well, I am reformed; you insist upon economy in dress, I am already shabby and penurious; you will have it that I should set an example to all the curates' wives in the diocese, behold what an example I set! you deprecate luxury in my surroundings, I work a sewing-machine upon a kitchen table, and have not a single picture on the walls of the drawing-room, only a couple

of framed texts ; you can go upstairs and see for yourself. Likewise, if you turn into the dining-room, you will observe plain ugliness in every detail ; all the gold and silver, all the plate and glass have gone : nothing beautiful and wicked remains behind—unless, indeed, it be myself !”

At this point the bishop, transported with love and admiration, succeeded in arresting the stream of mocking words. But she soon went on :

“ You wish me to take a leading part in the charities of the diocese, so perhaps it may please you to know that the ‘ Society of Modest Maidens ’ meet here to-morrow. ‘ Good girls,’ you know. They will swing and play at skipping-rope, decorously, beneath your study windows from the hours of two to six. I hope that you have no work on hand which they can interfere with ; but if you have, you will rejoice to be disturbed in their cause, I have no doubt. On the following Tuesday the same ropes will be used and the same games will be played, with the addition of ‘ Aunt Sally ’ and ‘ Kiss-in-the-ring,’ by the ‘ Giddy Girls’ Amendment Mission ’ ; and so successful have been the efforts of this charity that I am promised that you will really see no difference between the two sets of young persons ! On Wednesday afternoon the wives of the beneficed clergy will hold a working-party in this room, to make surplices for their choirs ; and on Thursday the curates’ wives will meet in the stone parlor to knit gray worsted socks for their own or others’ husbands and children. On Friday—let me see what it is on Friday, I forget, I must consult my tablets—oh ! the ‘ Society of Superannuated Sextons.’ They will be suitably addressed by the cemetery chaplain, the old man who has already buried upward of thirty-two thousand people, all off his own book ; who, by the way, is never in a hurry, always quite cheerful, never takes a holiday, and has got eighteen sons and daughters of his own. See how well I have informed myself, and how admirably I have worked the diocese while you have been away ! I can tell you at once, Terence, that the best man that the diocese contains—next to yourself of course—is that cemetery chaplain.”

“ Far beyond me, my love ; it’s a case of ‘ last shall be first ’ I doubt not ; but pray continue your category.”

“ Well, then ; on Saturday the clergy widows and orphans are to

come to tea, I shall make it with my own hands ; after which I shall address them personally, since I have had some experience as a widow, while Bruce, as an orphan, will say a few words to the children afterward ; he can't begin too early. Then one of the chaplains, who has a Kodak camera, is going to photograph us all, including of course *me*, in my plain black garments, and a copy will be given to every widow present, for an example to the diocese of modesty of apparel. I have left out Monday, have I ? Oh, yes, I see I have ! Well, on Monday it is the 'Discharged Footmen's Friendly,' and our late butler will address the company on 'Some of the Fundamental Laws of Domestic Economy.' Say I do not understand the profession of being a bishop's wife after that ? Say I can't set an example to myself and everybody else when I try ? Now, do you like me, husband ? Am I not good, am I not nice, am I not sweet, am I not pretty, am I not all your fancy painted me, and a good deal more besides ? You've decided to allow me a weekly sum, I know you have ; I can see 'allowance' written all over your face. What a strange fine face it is ! And in every line of your broad forehead I trace precepts and maxims ; in every curve of your mouth I read the low figure you are thinking of ! Your very smile reproaches me ; your lips are loaded with remonstrances ; your proposed phrases exhort me to amendment. I assure you I am amended already. Now, believe me, do. Sit down here ! I have left one arm-chair, an old one, in the room on purpose for your accommodation, with broad arms for mine. You will get your dinner presently, and I hope you will approve of it. I have ordered three mutton-chops and a single bottle of soda-water, but it will not be ready yet awhile. I can give you an orange if you are hungry, to keep you going till the housemaid brings the chops. Oranges are twenty to the shilling in the market-place now. You won't have one ? Well then, kiss me. Am I grown too grave, or shall I sit upon your knee ? There is nothing to crush about me now. Last week you could not expect me to be affectionate, I was only loyal. One sentiment at a time should always prevail in the mind of every well-conducted young woman."

Who could have resisted her when her especially provocative beauty was thus set off by the charm of contrast ? And yet this was the same woman who had so lately posed as a queen, gorgeous

and unapproachable in her complicated magnificence. Her husband found her even more charming now in her artistic, if somewhat exaggerated simplicity; she was like a nun, or rather like a lady-abbess, and yet she sat upon his knee and nestled in his arms. He was fain to caress her shining hair, even while he expressed a hope that the urgently necessary reform, thus happily initiated, would endure; but she stopped his mouth, as she well knew how, and refused to attend to the few grave words which he did insist upon making audible, even to her reluctant ears. She cut short all further remonstrances by protesting the sincerity of her own good resolutions, and he was but too glad to believe her.

"Have you not already set everybody an example of heroism?" he said.

"Well, then," she retorted, "why do you doubt that I have more copies in my book? Why, I can purchase forty-eight excellent moral maxims for the precise sum of one penny, in a copy-book for Bruce's benefit. At least, may I not reckon myself worth as much as that?" Presently she changed the subject. "Did you hear that Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby was in town before you met him at dinner at the hotel? And did you know that he had called upon me several times? He has bought a pony for Bruce; it is a very small one, and now that he is a young gentleman of large and independent expectations, I do not feel called upon to deny him luxuries which may not be meant for me."

While talking she still kept her place on his knee, and lifting up the black worsted sock, made as though to continue her work.

"And were you awfully jealous about Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby?" she further asked, without lifting her eyes from the sock.

But at this her husband resolutely put her from him, and she, covertly watching, noted the change in his countenance as he said:

"Victoria, there are some subjects on which I cannot hear you joke; this is one of them. Be so good as not to allude to the subject again in any future conversation which we may have. I may as well inform you that I have reasons, with which you are unacquainted, for what I say. Do not ask me any questions; I prefer to drop the subject."

"Evidently; together with the object and the acquaintance-

ship!" she said, opening her lovely eyes wide, with a look like that of a puzzled and astonished child.

Dr. Garfoyle regarded her gravely for a moment, as though in thought, and then left the room. He had not the slightest intention of insulting her by telling her that some vulgar spy had previously given him a slanderous version of the visits which had been so frankly accepted and reported by her. But he did not desire a continuance of the honor of Mr. Farnaby's acquaintance; and he knew his wife to be woman of the world enough to accept the hint as sufficient. He had no fear of either hearing or seeing any more of the Hon. Lionel Brabazon-Farnaby, whether at Croyland or Constantinople, for the remaining term of his natural life. So far the heart of Victoria's husband at least might safely trust her!

Just about this time Victoria made an important acquaintance in her nearest neighbor, a very wealthy lady, whose grounds adjoined those of Croyland Court. Mrs. Basil Boscombe, in her younger days, had lived much, packing emotions and events in a reckless way which had rendered her an old woman at fifty. She had seen everybody, she had been everywhere, had heard everything, had thought about everything. She had enjoyed most things, and had suffered as many or even more. Now she was a widow, childless, invalided, and sofa-ridden. It chanced that Victoria, in pursuance of the plan by which she undertook to convert herself into a walking copy-book, found it necessary to the injunction, "Sympathize with the Sick and Suffering," to call upon Mrs. Boscombe. It will be seen from this that she had already advanced so far as the letter S in her dramatic rendering of moral maxims; a circumstance which might be taken to augur ill for the future stability of her conduct, since her reformation had not taken place until the second week of January, and she paid her first call upon Mrs. Basil Boscombe in the third week of February.

The ground was covered with snow, but Victoria picked her way on foot through the unswept lane which divided the two properties, and she was rewarded in a perfectly unlooked for manner. Her welcome was warm and unconventional; she spent an hour of keen interest. It was the very thing she needed, this stimulating, free, and unfettered gossip, world-gossip, with neither local coloring

nor limitation of party or of person. So much goodness as she had been indulging in had taken it out of her horribly.

Mrs. Boscombe was not at all too strait-laced to discuss men and manners freely, as they had liberally presented themselves, in a vividly recollected past, to herself and her fair visitor; while at the same time she was too well-bred a member of society ever to forget that Victoria was the wife of the bishop of the diocese. She had not much love of the clergy herself; but living as she did in a cathedral town, beneath the wing of the Church, she knew how wisely to envelop and label all the social criticisms which she allowed herself to insinuate, rather than to utter. She also cleverly tried to rivet a pleasant intimacy with Victoria by placing her under an obligation; and as the one lady was quite as clever as the other, Victoria accepted the situation quite openly. Indeed it suited her exceedingly well so to do, and it may perhaps be guessed that when she walked through snow quite a foot deep in places, and entered Mrs. Boscombe's drawing-room wet, and leaving foot-prints of snow to melt where she stood by the invalid's couch, that she had already conceived the design which was thus communicated to the other lady.

"Had she really walked? Where then was her carriage?"

Victoria explained that she had sent it up to town to be renovated, after the rough usage it had received in the accident at the mines. This was all she chose to say, but Mrs. Boscombe, who heard everything, had already learned all about the domestic reform in the bishop's establishment, and was well aware of the current report that, owing to financial difficulties, the bishop's carriage and horses had gone up to town to be sold. She immediately ordered her own carriage out for Victoria, and further placed it unlimitedly at her future disposal. She only spoke the truth in explaining "that she was quite unable to make any use of it during the winter months, and that as her horses were eating their heads off in her stables, and her men in their houses, the greatest service next to coming to see her, which the bishop's wife could render her," would be "to use them as her own."

This arrangement, in fact, worked very well. It was suitably represented to the bishop; it was suitably represented to the servants; it was suitably represented to everybody by the astute Mrs.

Boscombe. To the dean's wife, and other wives of the cathedral clergy, she spoke with gratitude of the "dear bishop's wife's kindness in consenting temporarily to use her equipage"; to her inferior clerical callers she varied the statement, and carefully spoke of "the wife of our revered diocesan," as a manner of speech becoming for them.

So Victoria gained her end, as indeed she generally did, and found herself in possession of a luxurious carriage, with no acknowledgment to make for it beyond the obligation of paying almost a daily visit to its owner—visits, indeed, which soon became the one stimulating event of her monotonous days. Mrs. Basil Boscombe grew more and more piquante as Victoria got to know her better. Intercourse with her was the only safety-valve Victoria found at hand; perhaps it alone enabled her to complete the category of moral examples which she had undertaken to set. Once inside Mrs. Basil Boscombe's drawing-room, she was able to exercise powers and to play with ideas quite unrecognized among the forty-eight excellent maxims which she had mentioned to the bishop.

"The margin of me finds expression here," she one day confessed to her friend; and that lady looked at her with eyes which accused that "margin" of being an extremely wide and varied surface.

"It's a dangerous thing," she said, "to have so much of your nature silenced."

"It will force itself to be heard all over the diocese one of these days unbidden," said Victoria. "Stand up for me when the day comes, Mrs. Boscombe. I ask it now, because then I shall be indifferent to praise or blame. Good-by!"

CHAPTER XXIII

A TRIUMPH OF AUDACITY

It was the anniversary of the day on which Dr. Garfoyle had been consecrated bishop of the See of Croyland, and had married Victoria Goldenour. It was a scorching day in July, and Victoria had arranged to celebrate it by a monstrous garden party. This

would, she told the bishop, be at once "cheap and comprehensive." Accordingly, a great gathering of clergy and laity had been invited. Victoria herself had selected it as being auspicious; the bishop himself would have preferred that hours so full of strictly private, and to himself personally of sacred association, should have been observed in the seclusion of their own home, and solemnized quietly by some service of perfect union and communion; but he was ever ready to defer to the wishes of his adored wife, and she had chosen to have a vast and miscellaneous gathering of friends and acquaintances, supposed to participate in the emotions belonging to the day.

Well, the friends were arriving every moment, smiling and pleased and in their best array, and Victoria was missing—had been missing, in fact, all the morning. Never a soul had seen her since she had kissed Bruce when he went to his lessons at ten o'clock. She had given all the orders for the day, and had carefully regulated all the details of the entertainment. She had not neglected to provide a single requisite item for the guests. She had chosen the dress she herself meant—so she said—to wear; it was a very handsome one, for she had months before tired of her freak of wearing black. Then, after embracing Bruce tenderly, she had gone to the room she usually occupied in the mornings, and had not been seen again. When luncheon-time came she was missing, and she had not been seen or heard of since, though the garden and grounds, and every likely or unlikely place, had been quietly hunted for her. Dr. Garfoyle had even sent to the railway station and had made enquiries there; to Mrs. Basil Boscombe's; and to other likely haunts, in so far as it was possible to enquire anywhere without awakening suspicion or exciting remark.

The bishop seemed painfully nervous upon this point; so at least it struck Mrs. Gruter. It chanced that both she and her adopted daughter, Helen Keltridge, were staying for a day or two at Croyland Court, their visit being timed with a view to the special anniversary, and Mrs. Gruter now stood in secret consultation with the bishop, as to the strange disappearance of his wife.

Mrs. Basil Boscombe, when interviewed, could throw no light on the matter. She confessed that Victoria had evidently tired

of visiting her of late, and that she had privately considered her restless and miserable. It was unfortunately rendered extremely difficult to keep the matter quiet by the very fact that everyone most likely to know and miss the bishop's wife was expected to be present in the grounds of Croyland Court. As Mrs. Gruter glanced out of the bishop's study window over the lovely gardens, where the grass was now scorched and burned with a fierce sun and a prolonged drought, she perceived that the gay groups of people were beginning to gather in knots, or to move about with one accord in some agitation this way and that, like bees bereft of their queen.

"It's an occasion for a lie, Dr. Garfoyle," she said; "and as you are a bishop and cannot tell your own lies, I must sacrifice my conscience and tell it for you. A good lie, well told, is all that is required," repeated the lady with decision; for, to say the truth, though she felt annoyance, she experienced no anxiety about the situation, which struck her as being simply whimsical. But when she looked at the bishop's wide, benign countenance, so often likened by her ready tongue to an expanse of the fen-lands in autumn, when the sun shone quietly down upon shorn fields of stubble; when she saw how it had grown blanched in hue, and furrowed with pressing fear, she changed her attitude and enquired gravely :

"What is there that I can do for you? Something must be done, and done quickly; all the company is assembling with detestable punctuality, and you do not, I suppose, wish to have them storming the house. They should be kept in the grounds as long as possible."

The bishop groaned.

"Pray go," he said, "and receive them all for us, Mrs. Gruter. I will myself join you immediately. I must carry this thing through. My friend, Bruce's tutor, can absent himself without remark. I have already sent him in a direction which I think possible. But before I join you I am anxious to see Mrs. Keltridge, here, alone. Pray send her to me. I am thankful for her presence and for yours at this moment."

"Yes, I am glad we were staying with you," said Mrs. Gruter kindly, "though positively I feel we are all creating a storm in a

tea-cup. What is there in a woman's being absent six hours at an inconvenient and unexpected moment? Well, I will go outside, and I'll undertake to keep all the rout at bay for a couple of hours at least. I will send Helen to you, but I fear you will have to put in an appearance, if you wish to stop the tongue of rumor. There is, no doubt, some perfectly reasonable and trivial motive at the bottom of all this worry; but for the present I shall say roundly that your wife has been taken suddenly ill, and is unable at the last moment to do her duty."

"It is true," said the bishop; "I have cause for imagining that she has been suffering of late."

"Helen, go to him, he wants you," said Mrs. Gruter, when she had found her adopted daughter in the garden. "I believe he knows or guesses more than he has yet said. He will tell me nothing, but he will tell you all. What a mercy that we two are here, and that our husbands are not! My poor dear rather prefers his nurse to me; it is a change for him in his old age to see a fair, smooth face, two pink cheeks, crinkly yellow hair, and hard brown eyes, instead of my old ugly visage; and as for your husband, Helen, we all know he is writing a book and loathes ceremonies."

Then Mrs. Gruter took up her position upon the top step outside the drawing-room window, waited till she saw the dean's wife coming along, stopped her, and made her little speech in a pronounced tone of voice, apologizing for the absence of the bishop's wife, on account of sudden illness which had attacked her only that morning. She only hoped Victoria would not appear in the midst of things now to discomfit her; "it would be quite like her."

The dean's wife was suffering from the effects of the extreme heat of the weather, and had no other thought in her mind. She was a stout person, a likely subject for apoplexy. So working her fan diligently, she protested that she "did not wonder"; that she herself had been "overcome in quite the same way," but with "even greater rapidity"; having begun to make her husband a cup of tea, she had put in one lump of sugar, but had been positively unable to add a second.

This decided the matter, the people behind all heard that Mrs. Garfoyle was suffering from sunstroke or heat-apoplexy. The dean's wife concluded her personal narrative by adding, "Now, that

is literally true." It was "literally untrue," as Mrs. Gruter well guessed, but it served her turn as a story, so she kept up the illusion; and when the bishop stepped out upon the terrace, he was greeted by condolences which did equally well for any sort of affliction. He received them all in courteous silence, accepting the sympathy and waiving the interpretation put upon the matter.

"On your wedding-day too, so sad to have Mrs. Garfoyle laid up," said the cemetery chaplain's wife, quite forgetting her own insignificance in the glow of her kindly sympathy. "Why, we have kept thirty wedding-days, and have never failed to sit down to supper together, with all the children around us."

"Where is the little boy?" asked another clergy-wife on the outskirts of the company; "sent away, lest he should catch it, didn't somebody say?"

Thus the company soon decided that Mrs. Garfoyle was ill of an infectious fever, and by common consent they avoided entering the house, which was just exactly what Mrs. Gruter desired.

Now, Bruce had, as it happened, been sent with Shadrach to a distant room by his step-father, who did not wish the boys exposed to bear the brunt of feminine curiosity down below. Bruce took his mother's absence quite serenely, and displayed no fears for her safety. He was accustomed to her paying many calls and being absent for hours daily, and he had been carefully kept in ignorance of anything unusual in the present situation.

When all the lies were "well told," and were rolling and gathering cohesion like snow-balls, without any further impetus from herself, Mrs. Gruter found time to draw her adopted daughter aside and rapidly to question her upon her private interview with the bishop.

"There the poor man goes," she said, "suffering tortures, not a doubt of it, while apparently listening to that bald-headed parson. He finds it easiest to stick to the men and their outside concerns, evidently. Women fasten like flies on a weak place, when men are too obtuse to know there is one."

"Women talk personalities, men generalities," responded Helen; "so he doubtless prefers them."

"Pray, is he really imagining that she has committed suicide, either physical or moral, Helen? What did he tell you? Has he

any reason to suppose she was discontented with her lot? Has she, by any chance, left it written in a letter? They always do. From the little that I have seen of her she never struck me favorably, and you know it. I should have said she might be the death of two or three husbands, but that she would never come to grief herself."

"You are hard upon her, mother! She has made him an excellent wife; she is deservedly popular in the neighborhood, among all classes of the people. Even the stiff and starched set have collapsed and taken her in; and, as for the poor, they adore her. She is universally beloved—indeed, no one could know her without admiring her."

"I could," said Mrs. Gruter.

"You did not know her, dear mother," said Helen warmly.

"It's my opinion that we none of us know her yet, but that we are all going to know her better soon," retorted the elder lady.

"Well," pursued Helen, "I suppose her husband may be allowed to possess some knowledge of her, and he declares that she has been simply perfect to him, as she has always been to her child; and that, since they returned home in January, she has not given him a moment's grief until——"

"Until when?" questioned Mrs. Gruter. "What stemmed the current of this domestic bliss? This is not the first break-down, I am very sure."

"Well, from time to time he certainly confesses to having entertained a doubt whether she was herself as happy as she was making him. She had grown restless of late."

"The signs?" demanded Mrs. Gruter.

"She had taken to wandering away for long evening walks alone in the dusk, and coming home very late at night; often going to her boy's room on her return. He found her one night lately lying on her boy's bed, across it, at the foot. Bruce's little naked feet were peeping out beneath the clothes; she had gathered them in her hands, and was holding them pressed against her cheek, and her tears were raining over them. When she found he had discovered her retreat, she seemed annoyed; and ever since then, when she has shown signs of wishing to avoid him, he has refrained from following her."

"Foolish man—better pursue her with his pastoral staff; if bishops aren't permitted a commoner kind of stick! Well, go on."

"She has made retreats for herself both in the house and grounds, and she has been accustomed to shut herself up in them with her boy whenever the fancy seized her."

"Now, we are getting to it! Pray, has this perfect wife ever run away from home before?" asked Mrs. Gruter coldly.

Helen Keltridge hesitated.

"One day she disappeared for some hours longer than usual. She took a run to the coast by train, went and got soaked through with the waves on the pier-head at Cross Seas, for no other apparent reason except that the impulse seized her; but when she came back, and he instantly proposed a family migration in due form, she resolutely refused to stir from home."

"Pray, has he sent now to the pier-head?"

Helen nodded.

"Oh, she is probably sulking in some bathing machine fifty miles away; whence she will in due course reappear with a pocketful of crabs and seaweed for Bruce, all the livelier for having tortured her husband and worried us all. She is fickle and changeable. She has a morbid craving for scenes and effects; for sensation—sensation of any sort. The only drawback to her present complete satisfaction in her escapade is probably that she can't be here to see the effect of it. It's a grand transformation scene which she has got up for our benefit on the anniversary of her wedding-day. If her unfortunate husband, whose devotion to her gives her the power to torture him thus, could only prove to her that she was not worth looking after, she'd worship him for the rest of his life."

Helen shook her head.

"I doubt it," she answered. "I cannot deny that there is truth in some of the things you have said; but Victoria is no sham—she really is a genuine creature. She is no mere actress, though she dramatizes her life."

"Pray, do you alone possess the key to her irritating conduct, then?"

"In a sense, dear Mrs. Gruter, I do. Strange as it may seem to us who know what a beautiful nature Dr. Garfoyle's is, I am yet convinced that his wife is a miserably unhappy creature. I have

always thought that she married him chiefly for the sake of doing her duty by her boy. Just think what a tragic history hers has been—her first husband's death, Bruce's illness, then his accident; her own dependence on an unkindly family. She felt Dr. Garfoyle to be a tower of safety to which to entrust the child's future. She resolutely sacrificed herself for her child when she married Dr. Garfoyle. Moreover, odd as it may seem to you, mother, there were religious motives in the matter. She thought it would be a sort of righteous action to cast in her lot with one so good and saintly; she mistrusted her own impulses and inclinations; she was afraid of making some unwise marriage—say with her 'Nice' admirer, the Constantinople person. She knew that Dr. Garfoyle regarded marriage as a very sacred sacramental sort of thing; he told her what he felt thereon, and tried to make her comprehend his feeling. She missed the point; but she came to regard her marriage with him much as a nun might look upon taking the veil; or a ritualistic maiden in an English church might think of kneeling bolt upright with an aching spine through a long service, or of fasting on Fridays, but to her it has probably been a perpetual 'retreat' ever since: one long fast-day, followed by no feast; although neither you nor I can think of him but as one of the noblest beings on this earth."

"Well," confessed Mrs. Gruter, "I take it that the sons of God, when they mated with the daughters of men, were not the only ones to be pitied in the sequence. Men and women, with digestions for bread and cheese, may no doubt be starved to death on angel's food. Your friend Victoria doubtless requires quails! She is sick of manna, that is what is the matter. It's an old tale. The world is very monotonous; but considering how plentiful quails are, and how scarce is manna, it's a pity things are so fearfully mixed. Here is a man in ten thousand, by whose choice any woman might be honored, and this silly, frivolous, widowed thing plays at martyrdom in being his wife."

"It is my belief," said Helen, "that when Victoria realized this morning what she had done in asking all these people, and felt that she would have to face them all and to receive all their congratulations on her wedding-day, she simply obeyed one of her sudden impulses in running away to hide her misery. See how she

even expresses herself in the letter I had from her last week when she invited us here."

"Oh, there is a letter, then ! I thought so."

"Yes, to me ; but not to her husband. Read this postscript, mother :

" ' Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end

—that is what my life is here. Come and make a break in it, for pity's sake. I cannot bear it much longer. I am weary of all things, save of my boy's beautiful face and of his delicious laughter, which is too good for heaven itself. I am sick of hymns. I loathe meetings. I abhor clergy-wives. I detest young curates and discreet chaplains. I have—to tell the truth—more than a lurking notion that the Church of Rome is vastly superior to the Church of England, especially in that it enforces the celibacy of the clergy. I am tired of the monotony of my days ; I am disgusted with their occupations. I am absolutely destitute of the religious sentiment—that is the conclusion I have come to—and my husband is steeped and saturated in it. Pity me, Helen, and permit me the relief of speech for once."

"You didn't show him that?" Mrs. Gruter asked in some anxiety.

"We spoke of it together. He understands it all now ; but I have no real anxiety about her and I hope I made him share that confidence. So long as her boy is here, she will never go away for long. Probably she will return to-night."

"Helen, how could you tell such a man as that that his wife was tired of him and miserable in his society?"

"We sought for the truth of the facts together," said Helen simply. "In by-gone years he helped me ; to-day it seemed to recur to his mind, and he appeared to feel a relief in showing me all his fears. I owed it to him to be loyal to what I knew to be the truth in speaking to him."

"Yes, I believe you could do it," said her adopted mother, "but I know no other woman who could have explained this to him."

"Well," she added, as they separated to resume their interrupted task of entertaining the bishop's unwelcome guests, "I

have told lies for him, and you have told the truth to him. What more can any man desire or deserve of his friends?"

"How dry the grass is! We had the prayer for rain on Sunday," said a country vicar's wife—wishing to be conversational—"and it does look threatening over the hills."

"You may have that prayer in villages," replied the dean's feminine representative loftily; "but we do not go in for it in the cathedral. On the contrary, the dean preached on Sunday evening on 'Evolution in Prayer.'"

"Glad I wasn't there," said Mrs. Gruter audibly.

"Oh, it's quite simple if you've any modern education at all," said the other lady crushingly; "it only means that we pray so much better now than they used to do in Old Testament times. My dear husband illustrated it so beautifully for the ignorant by remarking how Moses might have said the prayer for rain, but not St. Peter."

"I'll stick to Moses, then," said Mrs. Gruter; "he got them water anyway, and St. Peter never undertook to. Now she's offended and will take her leave, and all the rest will follow," observed Mrs. Gruter to her daughter, and even as she said so it happened; within ten minutes of this social encounter the guests were rapidly taking their departure. The bishop shut himself up in his study, Mrs. Gruter and Helen made a melancholy meal together, and Helen persuaded Bruce to go to bed, wide-eyed and unhappy because he was told that his mother could not come and see him that night.

At midnight Helen Keltridge was sitting alone in her room reviewing the unsatisfactory events of the day, when, without any warning, Victoria herself entered softly and suddenly stood before her. She was dressed in dark clothing, and wore an indistinguishable cloak and hat. She dropped into an empty chair opposite her friend's, and, looking at Helen with a questioning gesture, asked with an affectation of sprightliness:

"Well, and how did the party go off?"

Helen started up.

"Victoria, have you been to see your husband, to relieve his terrible anxiety about you?"

"No, I have not," said Mrs. Garfoyle; "I have been in to see my

boy. I went there at once to make sure that he was well, and asleep, and happy. Then I came in here to have a cosy chat with you. I am thirsty and tired. I want some tea, but I don't care to go and wake the maids."

"How did you get in?" asked Helen, hurriedly dressing herself.

"Oh, in a big house like this there are always windows and doors that can be opened if you only know the way, especially in sultry weather when windows are not closed till dark. As a matter of fact, I have a convenient mode of entrance of my own, which no one else but Shadrach has happened to discover; in fact, he used it first and has never found me out. I had to wait till everyone was gone to bed; I didn't care to meet them. As soon as I saw all the lights put out except in Terence's study and in your room, I came in by Shadrach's entry. That boy will turn out ill, will be a curate, I don't doubt it. Where are you going now, Helen?"

"Down to your husband's study to tell him you are come home safe and well. You forget how cruelly you have treated him. He is a thousand times too good for you!"

"Indeed he is, quite good enough for you yourself, if only Mr. Keltridge—— Pray, tell him I am penitent. He approves of suitable emotions, only do not let him ask to see me. I am tired; I cannot stand a fuss to-night. Manage him for me, Helen; you have all sorts of consoling ways about you which I never could acquire; my ways are provocative alike in love or hate, yours soothing and consolatory. I am a stimulant, you are a sedative. That is the difference between us. Tell him I'll come down to breakfast and will make his tea in the morning as good as gold, if only he will overlook me to-night, for indeed I am very sorry to have grieved him so. Entreat him to forgive me, for I am dead tired."

As she spoke, Victoria threw herself back in a low easy-chair, took off her boots, which were covered with dust, thrust her feet into Helen Keltridge's slippers, bathed her face and hands with eau-de-Cologne, and was immediately more than half asleep.

Helen found the bishop's door locked.

"She has come!" she cried. "Pray, let me in."

He rose, evidently from his knees. The drama of this man's life

was lived out absolutely in the presence of the Invisible. The sorrow which had just burst upon him was to him but another sacred secret, a new tie between his own soul and that of his Master. Already, before he heard his friend's tidings, the triumph of victory had shone upon his expressive countenance.

"I knew it already," he said. "I felt sure that she had come! Now, what can I do for her? You have done your part, I well know, my friend, and for her own sake, which renders your gentle aid doubly welcome to me."

"Leave her to herself, for she is tired out. She will come down to-morrow morning as though nothing were amiss."

"In the morning I must speak with her," he said in a tone which admitted of no discussion; "but for to-night is there no little thing I can do to serve her even?"

"For to-night you can get her some tea," said Helen, conscious to her very finger-tips of the drop from the bishop's mental attitude to that of Victoria's needs. Taking up a lamp he hurried off, thus gratifying an almost irresistible need of tenderness. Leaving him to discover his way about the basement, Helen paused on her return to her room and tapped at Mrs. Gruter's door; that lady admitted her, dressed in a wonderful dressing-gown of her old professor's, with a shawl tied over her head.

"So she has come back, and what is he going to do with her?" she enquired.

"At present he is getting her some tea."

"If he isn't going to have it out with her to-night he is making a very great mistake, and so are you in aiding and abetting him. It's a pity," said Mrs. Gruter, as, groaning with gymnastic effort, she climbed into the high bed, "that there isn't an infant Garfoyle howling in a cradle; then we should probably all be permitted to sleep in peace. I'm out of patience with her. I shall go home to-morrow."

"He is not coming in here, is he?" asked Victoria, starting up from sleep at the sound of the tea-tray being deposited on the table outside the door.

"No, he is not," said Helen sternly; "go to the door and wish him good-night."

Victoria obeyed reluctantly. Then, in this inconsistent nature, a

sudden revulsion of feeling awoke. Her fortitude completely gave way. She burst into agitated sobs.

"Good-night! I love you! Oh, I do love you!" she cried. Then, changing into pathetic entreaty, "Helen! keep the door shut!" As soon as the bishop's retreating footsteps echoed along the corridor, smiles and even laughter lit up her lovely face. "Oh, I am so tired!" she said. "I've been tramping up and down Crossborough moors and hill-sides all the live-long day, just for the sake of being free. I got upon a broad flat expanse of moorland, where nobody might be met but now and then a stray shepherd. I tramped on for hours, and I cried out all my miseries to the blazing heavens. Once there was a brief thunder-shower, then the darkness of the sky overshadowed me. I was on the top of Crossborough Beacon, and the black clouds swirled over my head like curtains. I hid myself in a clump of trees a little way down the hill-side, and I lifted up my wet face to the rain, which mingled with the tears running down my cheeks. After that I felt better, and I turned my steps homeward again; but I had lost my way completely, and I wandered about, I cannot tell for how long, until a lad put me back into the road. Well, here I am; now I am good again, better than ever. You will see to-morrow morning, but to-night I must sleep by Bruce's bed. He has not missed me, has he? You would not let him be unhappy. My husband would see to that. I could not have left home for an hour had I had any fears for him. I have not another word to say."

And, indeed, she was asleep upon a mattress on the floor, by Bruce's side, almost before her friend had closed the door; and whoever waked in that house that night, it certainly was not its mistress, who slept an absolutely dreamless slumber, and was awakened only in the morning by her boy half-strangling her with eager kisses. Victoria lay still exactly as she had flung herself at night in the immovability of extreme fatigue, but she locked her hands about him when she felt Bruce's cool, fresh kisses on her face. He laughed and wriggled out of her embrace. Then, in his white night-shirt, he flew to the window, opened it, and, snatching at a big bunch of late-flowering red roses, began playfully to pelt his mother with them.

When, five minutes later, the anxious man below ascended the

stairs, he was greeted by the sounds of merry strife. Victoria was romping with her boy. The bishop's heart was filled with sorrowful tenderness and pity. She had left him to a night in which he had sounded bitter depths of humiliation and anguish. Had he sought indeed "too late" to blend his life with this fair woman's? His feeling for Victoria had been intense. Even when they were comparative strangers he had never failed to discern the heroic element in her nature, and when personal ties were added his heart had melted with tenderness for her. He grieved for her most truly, because of his own failure to secure her happiness. He would fain have given her only pity and compassion, but he would not be true to himself or to her were he to permit such escapades without one warning word. If she could not remain at his side from affection, yet she must remain from duty. Duty forbade him to excuse her altogether from her duties toward himself, yet he would arrange for her to travel, to leave home for a considerable period with her boy, whose health might well furnish an excuse for her absence.

Indeed, the bishop had noticed with deep concern of late that the boy's nerves seemed even more delicately balanced than in the days preceding his Milanese accident; and though his coloring was good, and he had the agile movements of a creature governed by an unusually quick intelligence, yet in his step-father's loving eyes he seemed to be a rare plant whose hold upon the earth, in which he was so slightly rooted, was more shaken than even his mother realized. A sea-voyage was the best thing for him. His mother might well take him out to her own old home in Australia, to the places associated in her memory with the happy hours of her early life there with Bruce's own father. This was the unselfish scheme matured by the bishop in those early morning hours. It was a terrible thing for him to arrange for them to leave him, but he never hesitated so soon as he perceived the necessity for the decision.

Hitherto nothing had served to disillusion him. Beneath the inconsistent surface of a disposition magnetized mainly by the love of pleasure, Dr. Garfoyle had humbly believed himself to have discerned in his wife the revelation of a nature essentially fitted for the correction of his own, by its very antagonism to the mystic and inward spirit by which his own soul was harmonized. In Vic-

toria he had recognized the wholly external and objective habit of life, whereby was furnished, he devoutly believed, an equal exposition of divine truth. In uniting his lot with hers he had fully trusted that she had instinctively, although not intellectually, made some such corresponding discovery; that she had felt that he too supplied some motive requisite to give a sublime meaning to her life, which should render their alliance holy. The first shock had come at the New Year, the second when she fled from him upon the anniversary of her wedding-day. Then through the noiseless solitude of his midnight vigil passed the whisper of voices audible only to his inner ears. The world of spirits in that hour was very near to him, and in the unspeakably intense realization of the divine participation in all human experience he remained rapt until the brightness of another dawn fell upon the earth.

After making a careful toilet and removing all signs of his night's watch Dr. Garfoyle had mounted the stairs which led to Bruce's room, with his heart full, not of his own part in the sorrow which had overtaken them, but of Victoria's pain, Victoria's unhappiness; he paused upon the landing, determining to enter the room so soon as the first sounds should prove the mother and child to be awake. But he had not to linger on the threshold, for the sounds of ringing, happy laughter greeted at once his listening ears; not Bruce's boyish tones alone, but Victoria's musical mirth joining in happy unison with her boy's treble. She had a fine contralto voice; she sung but little, but her laughter had always possessed that characteristic of soft, melodious mirthfulness which accompanies that peculiar quality of voice; now there was a note of voluptuousness in the sound which, to his scholarly fancy, prompted the thought that such music of laughter might well have been heard in old legendary days, when fabled gods and nymphs sported upon happy plains. But when he entered the room Dr. Garfoyle felt that all the pictures which he had ever seen would fail to show the charm of the beauty incarnated before him in this loved woman and her child. She sat upon the floor in her pale pink robe, the warm delicate coloring of her lovely face contrasting with the shower of rose-red leaves with which her boy had pelted her. The child had leaped from his bath, and like a young Cupid, in innocent, blissful nudity, was sporting round her. Each warm line and

curve of his young wife's dainty form, each turn of the child's dear lithe body was full of grace ; the eager hands which grasped the flowers he had snatched for the mimic combat ; the drawn-up foot that had pressed upon a thorn amid the scattered clusters. Never had he seen Victoria look so divinely fair as now, bathed in the rosy flush of the early morning sky ; she and her child alike seemed just as fresh and sweet as the new day.

A hot shaft of July sunshine was pouring through the opened window ; it fell full upon the bishop's broad white face, as he stood grave and motionless in the centre of the room. It strongly emphasized the outlines of the shadow which fell around him. Where the brightest light is, there the deepest shadows fall ; and upon the heart of this man, who stood ever in the light of God, the deepest shadow rested. Thus was the forlornness of his situation heightened. With his fine head—the head of a saint or of an apostle, yet with a grotesquely human streak in its composition—his melancholy gray eyes, and the straight folds of his official black clothing, he presented a remarkable contrast to the bright natural coloring of the young mother and her child. His grieved, remonstrant attitude, too, was singularly out of keeping with the scene which he interrupted.

When standing on the threshold of the room the music of gay and sportive laughter had sounded in the bishop's ears a note of classic association ; but when the morning splendors of a summer's day, streaming in through the opened windows, blinded him momentarily by excess of light, these fancies dropped back into oblivion ; the old gods vanished into the dust of ages, and his soul was penetrated anew with the vision of the All-Beautiful, at whose will the light and fragrance filled his heart with rapturous peace. As he stood motionless, gazing at the gay and lovely woman whom he adored, by love and faith he beheld the divine alchemy transforming the dross of earthly failure into the pure gold of heavenly achievement ; the perfected soul gathering up the fallen petals of human endeavor until they blossomed into the immortal flower whose completed perfection no winds might scatter and no time might fade.

Thus he read the story of their interrupted lives. Thus he interpreted these throbbings of quick, unsatisfied sense which agitated her perpetually. Thus he translated her passionate yearn-

ings for soft pleasures, for harmonious sounds, for fragrant perfumes, for the lustre of light, the shining of gold, and the magic of beauty. He, too, delighted in all beauty as expressive of the influence of the aspiring soul over the laggard flesh ; he, too, saw in all loveliness, which penetrated the mask of the body, an effluence from the hidden and the divine. By the light of this illumination he read the story, and drawing her fondly toward him he told her so. He, too, had yearnings and desires unutterable by him, unbreathed even to her, which found their meaning and their realization only in the vision of the All-Perfect, the Altogether Lovely, the immortal Bridegroom of the widowed soul ; “and was not,” he added, “every soul of mortal man widowed in its hour ? Beloved, think you not,” he said, “that since you left me my soul too has been desolate ?”

The child had left the room now, and he drew her closer toward him, speaking thus. He spoke with lips which never stumbled for a word, with face alight with the inspiration of his half-interpreted thought, with eyes that did but mirror the uplifted soul, and in the tones of his moving voice was the ring of a great rapture, the elation of a mighty hope.

Victoria dropped her roses and thrust them from her with her foot, urged by a momentary impulse to proclaim them emblems of nothing, but simply worthless flowers to her. The gong sounded for breakfast, and she was hungry. Hitherto she had successfully evaded the yearning intensity of her husband’s gaze fixed upon her ; now she deliberately met it with playful defiance. Suddenly stooping, she filled her hands with masses of red rose-petals, and laughingly flung them in his face. It was a triumph of audacity!

CHAPTER XXIV

WHAT HELD HER BACK

VICTORIA GARFOYLE had reached the supreme day of her mortal existence. In her earthly career she was to traverse no hours comparable with these which she now entered upon with the breath of roses floating around her, and with her ears filled with her child’s

dear laughter ; unless it might be those of the day whereon her brave young husband had gasped his life out at her feet. There are beings in whose lives tragic events are apt to assume epic proportions ; they seem to be marked out for the pursuit of all that life holds of torture, yet such are ever those for whom it also holds the brightest hours of keenest pleasure. In all the long years of her after-life this July day was to stand out black and lurid with misery, beside that other day now hidden beneath the shadow of the past ; and yet she herself paved the pathway which was to lead to the scene of her anguish.

In the utter darkness by which human senses are muffled by the envelope of the material world, no sound, no voice, no hint of coming ill reached Victoria, as she left on the floor of her room the scattered roses, with the thorns of which she had so deeply pierced her husband's heart. With her arms around her boy she descended to the breakfast-table. Mrs. Gruter had received a letter giving so much better an account of her bed-ridden professor as made her wish—so she said—to return home. It seemed possible that he might even know her from the nurse with yellow hair and brown eyes ; though Helen Keltridge more than guessed that, on this occasion at any rate, the old lady's conscience had discovered a dispensatory clause which permitted her to use one of her own "good lies" for her own benefit. Anyway, she departed immediately after breakfast. The bishop had his interview with his wife in solemn separateness. It did not last long, and Victoria came out triumphantly to inform Helen Keltridge that she was going to engage her own and Bruce's passage for Sydney by an early steamship. Then, annoyed by her friend's unsympathetic reception of the tidings, Victoria ordered Bruce's pony to be brought round to the door, and left Mrs. Keltridge to her own devices.

The day was Tuesday ; the preceding Friday had been occupied with a school-treat at which Bruce had been present, and the boy had not ridden as usual ; on Saturday it had been discovered that the pony must go to be reshod, and again Bruce had not been out as usual. Monday again had been the day of the party. This was Tuesday, and the pony had had no exercise to speak of since the preceding Thursday. When brought round to the door it was evidently full of running. Victoria herself did not see it ; she was

in her own room deep in a letter just received from Mr. Brabazon-Farnaby, in which he informed her of his approaching marriage with an American heiress. But Bruce was plucky, and the groom, professionally disinclined to discourage him, merely suggested :

“Take the paddock first, sir, and back by the lane leading to the stables, before we take him out on the highroad.”

At first the pony galloped steadily along without giving the slightest cause for uneasiness, but, a little more than halfway round the enclosure, just behind them, suddenly sounded the shrill, ear-splitting whistle which Shadrach, who daily attended the choir school, had picked up from the other boys, to the general disgust of the whole household. The pony started, and fought for his head ; but so well and straight was his rider sitting that the servant judged it best not to interfere, and Bruce successfully gained the entrance to the narrow lane leading back to the stables. They were but a very short distance from home when Victoria, seeing them from a window above and terrified at the pony's pace, rushed downstairs to receive them on their return to the stable-yard and to insist upon Bruce's dismounting at once.

Shadrach was also dawdling about in the stable-yard, as was his custom when dismissed from school. The pony and his rider were already so close that Victoria could see the set, tense expression upon her boy's face. The groom was riding side by side with him now, and his look was full of anxiety. A couple of hundred yards, only a couple of hundred yards now, and the boy would be in safety. What could Victoria do? His foot grazed one of the posts of the wooden palings which they rushed past. The boy was evidently straining every nerve in his efforts to keep straight in the saddle, and to clear the railings of the parklike grounds on either side.

“He has lost all control over the pony; it is running away; he will fall directly !” screamed Victoria in unavailing terror.

There was no one within hearing but Shadrach. Hitherto Shadrach had seen nothing but fun in the affair. His whistle had produced a striking effect ; it proved it was the right kind of noise to make, that was all ; but now realizing from Mrs. Garfoyle's words the gravity of the situation, the unlucky boy was seized with the notion that if he could only close a low barrier of wooden

bars which cut off the stable-yard from the lane before the pony and attendant horse reached it, the pony would be stopped in its mad course. Thus to close the entrance to the yard was the one idea that presented itself to Shadrach's blundering brain; and quick and active as a boy of his age should be, he leaped to execute his thought far more swiftly than anyone could have divined or prevented his intention. There came, too late, a scream from Victoria, a desperate shout from the groom, a crash of splintered timber, and man and horse were rolling on the ground. The pony, suddenly checked, stood panting and perfectly motionless; but the boy lay amid the wreckage of splintered bars.

When Victoria perceived what the wretched boy Shadrach had done, she aimed an instinctive blow at him, as he ran back past her toward the house, which laid him prostrate on the pavement of the yard; he recovered and leaped up in amazement, just after the crash occurred, and rushed screaming with inarticulate outcry into the house.

Victoria flew to her boy and lifted him up in her arms. She saw that he lived, for his eyelids fluttered. She flew with him into the house. There, warned by Shadrach's cries, the bishop and Helen Keltridge met her. Bruce had partially recovered consciousness. He stirred uneasily in his mother's arms.

"Oh, father, don't let mother mind!" he cried. "Oh, darling, never mind! What is it? What has happened? I dare say I've done as bad things to myself before!" Stroking her face as he lay in her arms, his tears mingled with hers; noticing it, he restrained his own by a supreme effort. "I dare say I can get down and walk," trying, and falling back with a groan. "Carry me to bed again, father—not mother, do not let her lift me; she was so tired last night." The bishop took him in his strong and tender arms and laid him down as he bade them. "Mamma, lie on the bed beside me now," he said, "and do not leave me while I sleep. Do not mind, darling. Only let me rest. I shall soon wake up quite well!"

He quickly lapsed into unconsciousness, from which he never woke again. He had struck his head heavily in falling; and his delicate constitution was unable to bear the shock. It was that, rather than the actual injury, which killed him.

"Save him, husband!" Victoria cried, distraught with fear. "Save him! What has become of all your power?"

"The doctors have been sent for," Helen Keltridge sobbed.

"Doctors! what's the good of doctors? If you cannot save him, husband, no one can. Why has your power with Heaven departed from you? Save him!" she commanded, as she saw the hues of the lovely countenance change and settle in death. "If you do not save him now I will never speak to you again! Do you hear me?" The bishop knelt with his face buried in the coverings of the little bed, and made no sign. She shook him in her agony. "I will leave you," she said, "I will renounce you! I only stayed by you for his sake. If he dies I shall hate you, do you hear? Do you comprehend?" she said, again seizing him by the arm, which she violently shook in her agonized grasp. "When you were a common canon you saved his life by your power with Heaven, can you not save him now you are a bishop?"

He opened his book and began to read the prayers for the departing soul.

"Not that!" she cried, "not that! What is the use of that? Any curate could read that!" And seizing the book she flung it in her passion across the room. But the child spoke once again; only the bishop caught the words, the mother was past understanding the sense of any words pronounced by him, even though they might be the last she might ever hear from his lips. The child raised himself up, and pointing to the bottom of the bed:

"See," he said, "mother! father! By the golden gate someone waits for me: his face is black but he smiles at me, and he stretches out his hands to me."

Helen Keltridge thought he was delirious, but Dr. Garfoyle remembered the dying miner who had seen the face of Christ in the darkness of the mines, and recalled his words, "I go to take care of the child for you till you come, which will not be long." And he bowed his head in thankfulness at the double promise, doubly accepted by him now. The bishop stooped, and gathering up the flowers which still strewed the floor, just as they had fallen first in the child's happy play, and afterward when Victoria had flung them in his face, he reverently placed them on the bed, beneath the child's pale hands. Victoria lay motionless now, giv-

ing no more sign of vitality than the lovely form beside her, from which the bright young life had fled.

Helen Keltridge slipped from the room, leaving the husband and wife together. Then Victoria started up afresh, but with gentle force the bishop replaced her on the couch, dominating her frenzy by his austere self-possession.

"Hush, my beloved!" he said; "do not disturb the moments of your child's passing soul; the Master has already called him unto Himself; no word or act of ours can avail to keep him with us. Good spirits wait for him. Christ receives him. Their very presence is around us. Do you not feel it? Though you cannot realize it, I tell you that it is so, that I know it!"

When they took him from her she rose only to gather all his little clothes and belongings together on the bed, and there she lay surrounded by them; gathering them like flowers up to her face, and dwelling in the perfume of loveliness and youth which they still exhaled, fresh from the sweet child's service. She only spoke of outside things once; that was to enquire about the groom, whom she ordered to be sent to her at once.

"How did it happen?" she enquired, when the man, with his head bent and his face covered with surgical bandages, appeared in her presence.

"You saw it, madam," he stammered. "I did my utmost."

"I know that; but what frightened the pony first?"

He stammered out the tale of Shadrach's whistle. So it was doubly Shadrach's doing. She knew already that the last scene in the fatal tragedy had been due to his folly.

"I thank you," she said to the frightened, trembling man, who stood in terror of her wrath. "I thank you. You have done your duty. I have nothing to reproach you with. I hope you may recover soon. But let me hear the pony shot. It must be done at once. Let me hear it. Do you understand?"

And having given the order she lay listening, and her husband and Helen Keltridge noted the cruel gleam of attention in her eyes till she heard the fatal shot.

"I would to my soul," she cried, starting up, "that it were the boy Shadrach!" Then turning toward her husband and raising her voice she said:

“Mind, if when I go downstairs again I find that wretch is in the house, I will kill him ! If ever I see him again I will kill him, and I will drive his mother out of the house. Her boy has killed mine. To think that that wretched, worthless rubbish of humanity, that common, cheap, vulgar wretch should live, and mine, my beautiful, my darling, my rare, priceless treasure should die ! Let them go ! Send them away ! Let them beg ! Let them starve, Pye, Trupper, and boy ! I would give her her son in his coffin if I could. Never let them come near me again ! ”

Victoria did not allude to the boy Shadrach again. The women, Trupper and Pye, were carefully kept out of her sight, as well as the lad himself. Helen Keltridge entirely waited on her herself. Either she or Dr. Garfoyle never left the room until the day on which all that remained of the fair and lovely boy was laid to rest beneath the shadow of the cathedral, in the beautiful cloister garth.

The funeral had taken place, her husband was sitting by the side of the bed which she had never left since the catastrophe, when Victoria suddenly expressed a wish to be moved to the window, whence she could obtain a sight of the garden and grounds below ; and Dr. Garfoyle, stepping to the window, drew up the hitherto carefully closed blinds. He helped his wife to rise and to dress, and, placing the couch near the window, opened it to admit the reviving breeze, rejoicing that she showed signs of a disposition to interest herself so far in the still flowing stream of the life around her. She fixed her eyes intently but silently on the now mended bar, on the narrow roadway between the grassy lines of the park and the garden wall. He saw that she was watching narrowly, intently for something ; but he could not fathom her precise thought.

“Leave me ! ” she said imperiously, turning suddenly to the grieved, heart-stricken man. “Leave me ! do you suppose that your presence, or that of any other human being, is any comfort to me, now that I have lost my all ? ”

He rose, yet hesitated, doubly afraid to take her at her word, or to contradict her. He determined to try an appeal, but before he could frame the words she insisted more gently :

“Leave me ! Go and ask Helen Keltridge to come to me, if you object to leaving me alone. You are driving me mad by watch-

ing me. Why must I always be watched? Why must I never be alone? I tell you I cannot endure it. I am being treated as though I were a lunatic! Leave me, I say! You can return in half an hour if you must."

He looked at her searchingly; she met his gaze with self-possession. There might well be truth in her words; that constant supervision might be aggravating her mental condition. His very watchfulness might well produce the mischief against which he sought to guard.

"I will leave you, my beloved," he said. "You will ring if you want either Mrs. Keltridge or myself. No one else shall come near you. If we do not hear your bell, one or other of us will return in half an hour."

He went; and the moment he had closed the door she muttered:

"You will return too late; too late in this house, too late in this world! Now is my time at last!"

She put on a hat, but remained watching at the window, her eyes turning from the clock to the courtyard below. In about three minutes she seemed to see what she had waited for. The boy Shadrach came out of the yard door and took his way to school, through the shrubbery which ran by the wall of the kitchen-garden to the paddock beyond, which skirted a little spinney, separated only by a wooden paling from the grounds of Croyland Court. She had discovered somehow that the bishop had placed the boy as a boarder in the choir school, to remove him from the house; but she had also learned that he had been present at the funeral, that he would at this hour be returning to the school-house in the town. Swiftly and silently Victoria slipped down the back-stairs, using the exit known to herself and to the boy alike; she met no one and pursued her course, escaping from the house by the customary window; the same by which, as she had confessed to Helen Keltridge, she had been in the habit of entering unperceived. Silently she pursued the object of her hatred, through the shrubbery which he had only just entered upon.

Shadrach heard footsteps behind him coming swiftly on, and instinctively he knew that his doom was pursuing him. He remembered the blow by which in her frenzy of anguish Bruce's

mother had struck him to the earth, when he made the fatal mistake of closing the double-bar. He remembered the thrashing which the coachman had given him upon the groom's representation of his share in the frightening of the pony ; he had the coroner's reproof still sounding in his ears from the inquest, when with the verdict of "accidental death" the important functionary had relieved his personal feelings by expressing a warm wish that he could legally order Shadrach the flogging which the coachman needed no such sanction to administer. He knew that his mother and his Aunt Pye had already packed their boxes, and that he himself had paid the last visit which would be permitted to the house where he had hitherto enjoyed the privileges of a favored home.

The boy was wretched. He had sobbed out his miserable grief to his mother, when he had "wished he might have died" in his generous companion's place ; still he valued that same life of his ; and he realized keenly that now he must either take to flight, or fight for it with the infuriated maternal avenger whose footsteps were rapidly gaining upon him. He doubled and turned. This movement brought him back, as he meant that it should do, to within sight of the house, and of help ; it also brought him to the very spot of ground whereon the accident had taken place. As he neared it he saw with horror that the gate was mended, that the strong new bars were down, and that his passage was stopped by them. That Mrs. Garfoyle would kill him, if she caught him, Shadrach entertained not the slightest doubt ; that she had become "a raving lunatic" was the common vulgar talk of the servants' hall ; by which his mother and aunt accounted for their own enforced change of place.

Victoria, too, was quick to perceive the advantage which the dropped bar gave her. With a cry of exultation she reached the boy and seized him as he flung himself upon the earth to crawl under the barrier. He was in the grasp of a woman who was assuredly momentarily mad with the thirst of revenge. She seized him, and dragging him up with a maniac's strength she shook and beat him furiously, striking him violently on the head and face. Shadrach could not even scream, so tightly had she grasped him. She had clutched him by the throat, and his eyes were starting from

his head, for he was enduring the initiatory pangs of strangulation. But the bishop had been thoroughly uneasy at having to relinquish his careful watch; and he and Helen Keltridge were both on the alert. They missed their charge before many minutes had elapsed, and help came quickly.

The bishop was the first to reach the spot. He unclasped his wife's hands with his strong, powerful fingers, and forcibly liberated the unhappy boy, who fell a shapeless lump of terror and of bruises on the ground where only five days before his gentle companion had met his fate. He found his voice now, and began to howl and bemoan himself in a manner quite reassuring to the bishop's ears. Beneath the stern control of her husband's authority Victoria suddenly became perfectly quiet; but as the boy began to pick himself up, she spurned him with her foot. Having kicked him with all the force that remained to her, she turned to her husband, and said vehemently:

"Why could I not kill him? I might have done it; I had sufficient time! Now, I shall never have another opportunity. Shall I tell you, Helen, why I did not kill him? It was only because I could not soil my hands with his blood. What a strange instinct," she muttered as they led her back to her room, "stronger than hate itself, the dislike of soiling one's hands. Think of it! I would give my life to have killed that wretched boy. I meant to do it; nothing hindered me, no lack of power, or of will, or of opportunity; nothing but the shrinking from the disgust of seeing his blood on my hands. Oh, I would to Heaven I could have done it," and she began to weep bitterly, "but I was too refined! Take me away! Take me away! Never let me see him again, or one of his hateful family. Pye slandered me in town, I know she did. That is how these creatures requite kindness. To think that that low, worthless thing should live and grovel there, and that he should have had the power to do what he has done! I was watching for him. I have watched for him every day. I knew he would come here to-day."

By this time the servants had begun to collect, alarmed by Shadrach's shrill, piercing cries. His hurts were nothing; but his voice, so exquisite in song, was an engine which he well knew how to use as an instrument of torture. Unfortunately Mrs. Trupper was one

of the first to respond to her boy's outcries. At the sight of her Victoria's excitement was doubled. The bishop found it necessary to use all the force he possessed to lead his wife safely away.

"Send that woman off?" she cried. "Her boy is living, let her take him and go!"

He assured her that the mother and son were both leaving, that she need never meet them again; but when he got her back to the room which had been Bruce's, and which was the only one she chose to occupy, she suddenly pulled out all the drawers, and began putting together her own and her child's things.

"I will go myself," she cried; "why should I stay with you? What are you, what is any man on earth to me now?"

In his longing, aching tenderness, he tried the force of an appeal, for he did not regard her as being entirely incapable of self-control.

"Will you not stay with me?" he pleaded, kneeling before her. "Shall we not mourn him together? Gladly would I have given my life for his, Victoria! It will not be for long. It will be for a very little time that I shall live to be your husband. You do not know it, but it is so. Stay with me, my heart's love, just for the short time that is left me here; let us take a tour together somewhere, anywhere you choose, but let us go together. Has not the love of the child made us one? Who can mourn with you as I can?"

"You! and why should *you* die?" she answered, almost in scorn. "Was he *your* son? Is it not for me to follow him and not you? Why should *you* escape when your lips have barely touched the cup of suffering, while mine—young as I am—have drunk it to the dregs? What have you known? What has your life held of agony? Why do you speak of yourself at all? What is your sorrow to mine? Were you his mother? Did you cherish him from infancy? Did you find the meaning of your life in his existence? Was he all that remained to you of the perfect love of your youth? Were you even his own father? Why should you be permitted to die while I live? Alas!" she cried, answering her own questions in the terrible cruelty of her bitter pain, "alas! you are old, you are over fifty, and I am still young. Yes, I believe it is true," she said, stopping and scrutinizing his worn and attenuated countenance, "I believe it is true, and you know it already; you

will be able to die and escape ; you are more than twenty years older than I am."

"If so, should you not like to feel, Victoria, that I was taking care of Bruce for you still ? Perhaps it was too late for me to take all the care that I desired of you both in this world. You were right after all, I fancy, when you gave me this ring, my dearest wife."

Then, impulsive as ever, Victoria turned and took all her treasures out of the boxes in which she had begun to pile them, and laid them back in the drawers.

"I will stay," she said. "After all, this was his room and I will live here. It was here that he played and learned ; and all the house is consecrated by his footsteps. What have I left on earth besides ?"

"Oh, my love, be comforted," the bishop entreated. "He has not known death ! We alone have tasted of its bitterness. He lay in a restful dream. The smile with which he fell asleep never vanished from his dear lips, which lines of grief will never harden now. He has passed, with the flowers which he gathered in his hand, from our home, of which he was the soul and the delight, to a state without sorrow or loss which shall hourly grow nearer to us through him. But, indeed, it is near already, although unperceived : surely he is still with us, though upon some purer plane, invisible to our grosser sense, closer, it may be, in our dreams ; and the vision of his face and the echo of his voice shall be to us the pledge that indeed our lives shall meet in union with the perfect love. Surely once to have possessed him shall be always to possess !"

CHAPTER XXV

A BENEDICTION

THE Dean of Croyland, a dignified and portly ecclesiastic, and his wife, were slowly walking down the road which led to the bishop's mansion, one lovely day in the summer following that in which Bruce Goldenour was killed by the fall from his pony. They

had reached the spot in the grounds where the boy had met with the accident.

"Poor child!" said the dean's wife, panting with heat and exertion, and glad to come to a standstill. "It was very sad; but sadder still for his mother and the dear bishop. It drove her out of her mind, I suppose, and I shall always believe that it has broken his heart. I wonder what queer collection we shall find at the Court now."

"If Mrs. Garfoyle were at home," remarked the dean, "the bishop would scarcely be able to convert the palace into a sort of almshouse for the diocese, as he now does. She would naturally wish to consider her house as her own: whereas, he regards it, it seems, as a house of rest for the diocese."

"It's a queer notion," said the lady, recovering a little breath.

"I imagine," pursued her husband, "that his aim is to gather round him a family and household of faith."

"I understand," said the lady, "that he depends greatly upon Mrs. Basil Boscombe's assistance—such an extraordinary choice for him to make—and that she has quite recovered her health, and is always looking after the society there. I understand that the bishop takes none of his meals with his guests, except dinner, when he sits at the head of his own table, and then of course he controls the conversation. At other times Mrs. Basil Boscombe superintends the society. Such an extraordinary choice. They say she arranges everything, and acts as the hostess, and comes in every day. That woman!"

"All the more need for the exercise of your own influence, my dear."

"Yes, to be sure," said the lady. "I do look in as often as I can, but it is a very different matter to being the actual mistress of the establishment."

And the dean's wife sighed, for she was only the wife of a dean, and she felt in herself all manner of excellent qualifications for playing a superior part, which were now wasted in her secondary situation. It pleased her to act the part of patroness to the wives of the inferior clergy; so she frequently looked in upon the bishop's humble guests. Also she felt it incumbent upon herself to apologize for the protracted absence of the bishop's lawful wife

and to teach Mrs. Basil Boscombe her own inferior place. How the bishop could select such a secular person to preside over his ideal family was a thing which the dean's wife could never understand.

"I suppose Mrs. Garfoyle is quite out of her mind, poor thing?" said one humble clergyman's wife to the dean's lady on this particular afternoon. "We heard she went out of her mind after the death of her boy."

"Quite violent, was she not?" said another. "We heard that she nearly murdered the boy whose foolish conduct led to the sad affair; but Mrs. Basil Boscombe is so very reserved; she keeps us all at such a distance that really, though we are on the spot, we never hear a word."

The dean's wife fell into the trap.

"Not quite insane," she said decorously, for she wished to keep these clerical "waifs and strays" in due subjection, "but something like it."

"Poor thing! she is very beautiful, is she not?" asked a third, thirsting for gossip.

"So much beloved, and so popular, was she not?" said the first, obsequiously giving the dean's wife a footstool. "Why, it was in all the papers how she devoted herself at the time of the accident at the mines, and how she supported the charities of the diocese. It's a sad thing for his lordship. Is she really in confinement, did you say?"

"No, no, not that," said the dean's wife; "only in the charge of her friends. The associations of this place are too painful for her. The doctors will not hear of her living here at present."

"We heard that she was always smoking cigarettes, and that she had become a Roman Catholic, and so did not think it right for the bishop to have married her, or for her to live with him," whispered another visitor to her companion.

All which gossip was sure to arise as soon as the dean's wife made her appearance. In Mrs. Basil Boscombe's presence it was never permitted. In "that laywoman," as the dean's wife called her, the bishop had wisely secured a most able coadjutor in the control of the feminine part of the clerical society by which he surrounded himself. Mrs. Boscombe was not only a stanch

friend of Victoria's, who would allow no liberties to be taken with her name, but she was in all respects a clever and independent woman, and one superior to the limitations of party or sect. She was free from the prejudices of what the dean's wife called "the clerical waifs and strays," and her sense and judgment far exceeded the powers of that lady herself. Having no dislike for any particular preferences in the professional party around her, Mrs. Boscombe was capable of being fair to all, and she aided the bishop loyally in his endeavors to make Croyland Court an asylum for those that needed it.

The history of Victoria's absence was this: One day, about a fortnight from the day of the boy's funeral, during all which time she had never left the room which had been his, she had suddenly dressed herself for a journey, and, running downstairs to the bishop's study, she informed him that she meant to go to Cambridge and stay with her friend, Helen Keltridge; but first she must visit her boy's grave. He immediately took her there himself, and finally conveyed her to her destination in person, rejoicing in her decision as a sign of returning interest in life. But for himself the step was a fatal one. She had resolutely refused to return to Croyland ever since.

The bishop wrote to her constantly and visited her with affectionate regularity; he tried all the means which love could prompt to induce her to come back, in vain. He was compelled to bow to the decision of her medical advisers, who declared her mind to be so affected by the shock, or rather series of shocks, from which she had suffered, that to attempt to bring her back, against her inclination, to the scene of the late disaster, would be to imperil her actual sanity. She refused to travel with him, to accompany him to any other residence, or to cast in her lot again with his, under any conditions which he could make. As far as the bishop was concerned, this was the final event in the tragic series. He returned alone to Croyland, feeling the time for persuasion or remonstrance was over; and Victoria, after remaining some months longer with her friends, the Keltridges, took a house that chanced to be vacant next door to them, and settled herself there in an absolutely solitary mode of existence.

She lived in entire isolation from the busy stream of life circu-

lating around her. She saw no society whatever, and apparently cared for none. How she passed her time at all was often puzzling even to her intimate friend, Helen Keltridge. She had no outside interests, and she possessed no feminine taste for making employment for herself. For religion, politics, literature, she cared nothing. Social questions simply bored her. She seemed to have exhausted all the powers and faculties with which she was endowed in her short life of less than thirty years ; to have merged the feeling of years in the agony of the past moments. Victoria lived, in fact, in a waking dream, steeped to the lips in sorrowful memories, tortured alike in the visions of night and in the cruder realizations which beset her by day. She never, as a rule, spoke of the past ; but Helen Keltridge had more than one evidence that her attack upon Shadrach Trupper weighed much on her mind. She asked what the boy was doing, and seemed relieved to hear that the bishop had placed him in the cathedral school.

"It is wonderful," she once said, "how easily I might have become a murderess. In fact, in soul I am one. Nothing but sensitiveness and refinement held me back, nothing literally but the habit of keeping my hands clean. My beloved child loved that creature so," continued Victoria. "I have seen him with his dear arms round the other's neck. He would share everything with him. Even then I often longed to send the boy away, but he had been of such service to my darling's health at Milan. Think, Helen, how I must have loathed to see the common, vulgar child in bed, at table with mine, thriving when he drooped and suffered, unmoved when he was in pain, carelessly serving him by his mere indifference. When I was tormented with anxiety for Bruce, Shadrach would bid him help to lace his muddy boots. Ah, those boots ! I have seen them stuck up on my sweet boy's bed to be fastened. And yet my husband was right. Even then my love admitted it, and endured it for love's sake ; but afterward all that I had borne and suffered was gathered up in one ungovernable act of passion, and when I thrust him from me I saw, not Bruce's arms round Shadrach's neck, but Shadrach's boots on Bruce's bed, and my sweet pale child with difficulty raising himself up to do the lad the service that he sought. But since then I have remembered that Bruce loved him so."

This was said with a great effort, on an evening when Victoria seemed to have a clearer interval of thought than common, and Helen Keltridge hailed the confession as a hopeful sign. These better moments surely would return, she thought ; but on the day that succeeded, and on all following days, the clouds seemed to have settled down again upon her spirit, and she alluded no more to anything that had happened, showed no disposition to see her husband and no inclination to return to her home.

"In short," said Mrs. Gruter, to whom Helen Keltridge repeated this conversation, "it is due largely to the civilized supply of hot-water cans usual in well-to-do houses that your friend has escaped her doom. Queer, was it not? But, had her trade been one which would have rendered her indifferent to these things, no power on earth could have saved that boy, and yet a butcher or a cook would have been sooner hanged than she ; they would have brought it in that she was mad ; and yet, after all, what is madness? Even the professor in his best days could never answer me that question !"

Left thus alone, Dr. Garfoyle worked harder than ever at all matters requiring his attention. He was indefatigable in discharging the duties of his office, with an ever-quickenened zeal, and more thoughtful, loving care—always with the deepest inner conviction that the time remaining to him was so short. He was absent a great deal from Croyland ; but when at home he took his place at the head of his own table, kindly, courteous, dignified as ever. While he thus spent his saddened life in converting lofty spiritual powers into good deeds for his fellows, the essential record of Dr. Garfoyle's bereaved life was a mystery, sacred and secret between himself and Heaven. These things were hidden in the depth and ground of his chastened being, and his sorrows were faced in lonely communings in the voiceless silence of his desolate room. Now to his nights and days seemed only left the abiding memory of a lovely dream. The spring-time of his life came late and out of season ; the flowers which it brought with it had no root nor hold upon the earth from which they sprang. The fair temple of his life's late promise had been laid waste by a sudden shock, shaken rudely stone from stone ; yet over the fallen ruins gracious flowers of courtesy and healing blossomed for those around him.

At one stroke he had lost the lovely boy whom he had loved as his own son, and the sweet woman for whom his soul was welling over with tenderness ; yet, as he sat alone and stricken down in the chamber once blessed by their occupation, not only did the benediction of Bruce's memory remain to sanctify his home, but the sweet influence of the child descended upon him still, with the pure undying love of a sweet spirit. But in the blight which had fallen upon Victoria she was removed further from him than even by death itself. So close she still was to him, in fact ; so near was the memory of all her winning ways and words, of the soft colors of her cheek, and the shining brightness of her mocking eyes when she threw the flowers in his face, on that last morning that she lived with him. Now she was divided from him by a gulf the mournful echoes of whose waves upon the barren shore whereon his hopes were strewn replaced the delicious laughter that had sounded in his ears. Still he seemed to hear the mingled music of her own and her child's voices in the air, and yet, although she lived for others, she seemed hopelessly cut off from him.

When he paid his stated visits to Cambridge to see Victoria, Helen was struck with the alteration in his look and bearing. His face, always pale, had now blanched visibly, his hair had become thin and white. His strong frame was attenuated and bent. A change had come over his spirit, once so free and resolute, and his outer man bore the marks of the severity of the struggle through which he had passed ; yet the experience had endowed his rich nature with magnificent accessions of power. At times he would speak, to those that had need of comfort, words which his inner ears had heard, of the mysterious secrets of consolation ; but there remained always with him a sacred reserve, a holy silence, a hidden revelation too dear, too pure for utterance. Even his physical frame grew more and more interpenetrated, impressed, and purified by the submission of his will to the divine inspiration, until, to seeing eyes, the very walls of his earthly tabernacle seemed luminous with the reflection of the indwelling spirit which animated it. The tender green of spring melts into the wealth of summer only after it has won its final conflict over the bitter assaults of the wintry blasts, the blighting frosts, and the stinging winds of winter. The sea gains its victory over the land in despite of the retrogression of

the tides, and in the heart of conflict the soul of conquest lies forever hidden.

There came at length an evening, two years after the boy Bruce's death and his wife's departure, whereon the bishop sat alone in his study, facing the light where the soft sunset of the dying day fell through the western elms. It was the room in which the bishop had lived, surrounded by his books, ever since he had taken up his abode at Croyland Court. The atmosphere was calm and clear, all the colors of his environment were dim and harmonious about him. He reposed in his arm-chair, his fine head resting on its back ; by his side his writing-table ; two letters lay on it, both finished, closed and directed, types both of them of all things else in his well-ordered life—in one he resigned the bishopric, being unable longer to perform its duties and knowing well that his last hour was rapidly approaching. The other letter was directed to his wife, to be opened by her on the next day after, when she should arrive after his departure, as he clearly foresaw that she would do.

The house was absolutely quiet ; now and then the closing of a distant door was the only sound that reached Dr. Garfoyle's ears. Croyland Court was, as usual, full of needy visitors, but it was the hour of the evening service at the cathedral ; and it was a rule in the bishop's house that all his guests should attend at the services, if possible. The distant sound of the organ reached him where he sat. He himself had come to the close of his earthly career, and with clear-eyed certainty he knew it well. Slowly and with full consciousness he had been treading the steeply descending path leading through the valley of shadows. Now with a deep inward force of conviction he knew and felt that he had reached the end of his appointed time. He had had no definite illness, no doctor had been called in to see him. No human physician, as he well knew, held the gift of healing in scientific hands for him. His life was drawn from sources which science did not touch ; its failure was distinctly due to causes beyond the power of science to defer or alter.

During the last week only the bishop had relinquished one task after another. Until then he had been able to walk to the cathedral, or to take his part in the services if he so desired. He had preached his last sermon only six days before, and had taken the head of his

own table; then he had become unable to descend the stairs; and, as each morning dawned upon a new day, feebler and feebler grew his worn bodily frame. He had spent the last week almost entirely alone in his room, sitting as he sat now. These solemn hours were none too long for the retrospect of all that his life had held of joy and sorrow. He was consciously living through the days and hours again; in spirit retracing his steps over every darkened and every illuminated portion of his road; so consciously that even his bodily senses seemed led to follow the old pathways, to see the vanished scenes, to hear the long-dispersed words, while his heart and brain suffered, loved, enjoyed, and learned the old lessons of his childhood, youth, and manhood, even those which Victoria had said that she would teach him. Yet ever was he as a spectacle to angels and to freed and saintly visitants, though hidden from the sight of men; not in solitude, though neither wife nor child nor friend was near, but in rapturous unison with untold and invisible presences did he make his last entranced spiritual communion. Having dismissed his attendants he remained all night where he was; the pulses of his bodily life grew weaker and ebbed rapidly, but for him there was no break in life. In the early morning hours his spirit won its power of stronger flight; his bodily tabernacle remained pure and pale as chiselled marble, as the breaking light of a new day streamed in upon his steadfast face through the unclosed windows of his room.

At half-past eleven on the night of the same day on which Dr. Garfoyle's work was done, Helen Keltridge and her husband were just retiring to rest when they were startled by Victoria Garfoyle's sudden appearance. She was, she told them, on the point of leaving by the night mail for Croyland. She would reach her destination about five or six o'clock in the morning. She assigned no reason for this sudden determination, beyond stating the fact that she was irresistibly driven to go and see her husband. She declared that she felt compelled to go to him. This was a step she had never taken before during the two years of her absence. Helen rejoiced in the reappearance of her old impulsiveness as a sign of returning health and revived affection for her husband.

Victoria's manner was visibly altered; it was alert and decided.

She seemed like a person awakened from a long sleep, who stood revived and refreshed upon the threshold of a new day. They accompanied her to the station, and saw her off. "She had not," she said in answer to their enquiries, "heard any worse account of her husband's health"; but "she felt obliged to go to him at once," she "could not conceive why." She had remained away so long. She had made no previous arrangements for quitting her own house in Cambridge, but, impulsive as ever, she was rushing off to Croyland.

"Helen Keltridge might see," she said, "to everything that she left behind her." She had but one idea, but one desire, to find herself at home, at Croyland, "beneath her husband's roof, within sight of her boy's grave." She had been "very wrong," she saw it now; she "blamed herself bitterly" for "remaining away so long"; but she had been "as one walking in a dream," who had now "suddenly awaked." She took a tender leave of Helen Keltridge; and begged her once more to arrange matters for her, as she had no intention of ever returning to Cambridge. Then she departed as suddenly as she had come two years before.

Victoria travelled through the night; but as soon as she reached her destination her footsteps carried her to Bruce's grave. She knelt beside it in the cloister garden, caressing with her hands the very moulds of earth which in that place seemed the nearest thing to the child she loved. The turf and flowers were as carefully kept as though she had been there herself. Into her mind came words that her boy had once in rapture spoken of Croyland Court as his new home, that "wherever they three were together there was home; home and heaven were one—and heaven was there." "Surely with angels about him she—his mother—must still find a place in his heart." Alas! it was neither "home nor heaven" to her now, this stately mansion wherein she was almost a stranger! Yet let her seek at once all that was left to her, and taste the love which she still possessed.

The music of a morning hymn reached her from the cathedral. There was an early six o'clock service, and Victoria remembered that the bishop, whenever he was in residence, had been in the habit of officiating at it. He would be there now. She turned in to see; but one of the archdeacons, the assistant clergy, and the choir

alone appeared before her anxious eyes. Unobserved, she hurriedly retraced her steps, and took the road to her old home. She passed again over the ground so fatal to her happiness, with an awful pang of agony; she recognized the new barrier, the very stones on which her boy had fallen. Her reason almost failed her at the sight; her limbs trembled beneath her, she grew dizzy, and could not for a moment proceed; she sank down upon the very spot, living again through those supreme moments. But again the impulse, not reasoned out, came over her; she got up, giddy and uncertain at first, and reached the old entrance; she knew that the servants would not be about yet, and that the front door would be closed. She sought the little window at the back by which she used to enter; it was unfastened as usual, and admitted her as in days gone by. No one was likely to be met at this hour, and she silently passed up the stairs, and on into the room which had been her child's first, and afterward her own. There all was unchanged. The room was haunted by vivid memories.

Victoria felt unutterably lonely; longing, yearning for her husband's love, for his comfort, for his presence. She was as one but just awakened from a long and troubled dream, wherein all shapes have become ill defined, all motives turbid, all imaginations confused. Now she saw clearly, and felt strongly; why had she ever left Dr. Garfoyle? What had induced her to forsake the shelter of the name, and the companionship of one so loving and so true? She had loved him so well, as she had cried out to him the night before her boy had died—when he stood on one side of the door of Helen Keltridge's room, and she on the other. Why must she always shut a door between them? Now she would open the door. She would return. There should be no separation, no division any more. She had been quite another person; another self to the one in which she now recognized her truest personality.

In spirit Victoria already felt her husband's arms around her; never would she leave him more. In this hour her eyes had been opened to see and know their union real, existing, enduring. She had come back, never to leave him again. How often had he petitioned her; how had she not seen his eyes praying to her to return; and she had answered his pathetic appeals with repeated refusals, how often! And now she had come back of her own

accord. She knew he would be within ; he was always in his room, naturally, at this hour, always alone. It was an hour which he always reserved for the communing of his spirit with the all-pervading love. There would be no disruption in her entrance ; it would be in harmony with his thoughts. She ascended the stairs, opened the door of his study, and passed in. She knew where he sat at this early morning hour, in his chair, facing the window. And she was right ; he sat there even as she had foreseen ; calm and motionless, resting in the large chair in which he always used to sit. No book was in his hand. His eyes were closed as though in sleep ; they had no viewless vision. His attitude was one of complete repose. Victoria fell at his feet and embraced them, crying :

“Bless me, even me ; oh, my father !” But there was no answer, save in the letter which lay—directed to her—upon the table.

The moment in which Victoria came to herself had been the moment in which the benison of her husband’s liberated spirit had descended upon her, bringing her the boon of restored mental health, which in life he had been powerless to win for her, in spite of many tears and prayers. It was by the exercise of this power that she had been brought to a new birth, a new being ; when restored in judgment, will, and affection, she had been irresistibly driven to return to his side. The letter which the bishop had left for his wife thus spoke to her :

“MY BELOVED:

“I have sent for you, and you will not fear to come this time, for the door which ‘shutting out, lets in no more,’ will be closed between us before you arrive. My love will serve you better so ; I have been unable to do for you here all that I would. But it has been shown me that my spirit will have power to liberate yours so soon as it is itself freed from the bonds of flesh and blood. You will awaken, my beloved, calm, and bright, and happy. You will realize that you are yourself again. You will know that I have gone to be with your darling child, Bruce. You will rejoice to think that we are reunited. In spirit you will be with me as you have never been, and with me you will be reunited to your child. Hitherto we have all three been divided ; once again we shall be together, and it will be given me to shield and protect you, as I

have been unable to do in this bodily condition. You shall never blame yourself that you left me : you were not wrong in what you did ; the instinct was a true one which led you to hide yourself till you had recovered from the awful shock which shattered your nerves and reacted upon your whole mental condition. It was indeed my deepest desire that you should remain under my roof, that I might be a father to you, and that through me you might be brought into nearer and more comforting knowledge of your continued union with your child, since it was given me all along to know him near, to feel his angelic presence, to realize the sweetness of his spirit's touch upon our spirits. All this I have yearned to show you ; but it might not be. It was withheld from you. But through me you will know it now. I could not teach it you before. Now I shall be able to bring to your consciousness the knowledge that our spiritual union is complete ; and I shall have the power to guide you on your way through life. Love, you are young, you are not fit to be alone. Find some husband, good and true, who will be tender to you ; become the mother of other children, and you shall know and realize through a long life that shall be prosperous and happy in years to come, that we two—Bruce and I—guard and cherish you, and wait for you until you come. To you now the years may seem long to traverse, yet remember that ‘with the Nameless is not day nor hour. Though we thin minds, who creep from thought to thought, break into “thens” and “whens” the Eternal “now.”’ Do not regret me, my darling ; think of me only as watching over you and yours—and may the blessing of the Eternal be over you.”

They laid the bishop, by his own special desire, to rest beside the boy whom he had loved so well, in the shadow of the cathedral, beneath the greensward of the cloister burial-ground ; and the sacred aisles of the cathedral resounded to the glorious strains of a triumphant Funeral March. When the entrancing beauty of the music of Spohr's magnificent anthem reached her ears, Victoria recognized the wonderful voice which had so often served to uplift the bishop's soul in the performance of some repugnant task for those he had served so meekly. The faultless harmony of the exquisite tones rang out as though the singer, knowing neither sin

nor sorrow, soared to some higher heaven than those that heard. Through all the arches of the cathedral the sweet strains swept, echoing in the clear-story of the roof : and Victoria, moved by the depths of her emotions, listened rapt and ravished out of the bitterness of her pain ; lost in a strange new sorrow, wherein joy and anguish met and melted into one full tide of being. Floated on a rapture the intenser that its motive was hidden in the very heart of aching and mysterious sorrow, joy and agony met in the birthday of an awakened soul, and Victoria forgave the singer for the love of those by whom he had been loved so well.

“ Yes, indeed it is a very wonderful voice, and I believe they are all very proud of it,” said one listener to another, in the dense congregation of those who came to pay their last respect to the bishop’s memory.

“ It is an exceedingly beautiful voice, no doubt, so strong and clear and true. He sings the solos in the anthems. People come from far and near to hear him. The boy is named Trupper, Shadrach Trupper ; his father, a small farmer, hanged himself ; and his mother was the bishop’s housekeeper. You see him ? that ugly lad, the third from the end ; he is sticking out his muddy boots with the laces undone. He is the boy whose mischief or stupidity cost the bishop’s step-son his life. The bishop placed him in the cathedral school, and it is said he has provided for him.”

“ He sings,” said the first speaker, “ as though he were an angel, and could not commit a fault if he tried.”

“ Whereas, in reality,” rejoined the other, “ he is the worst boy in the choir school. My husband is one of the masters, so I ought to know. He often says he would ‘ give devout thanks if Trupper’s voice broke,’ and then they could flog him as he deserves ; whereas at present they have to take into account that if they make him howl, it may damage his voice for the anthem in the afternoon. The dear bishop always befriended him, but I believe Mrs. Garfoyle never could endure the sight of him after the accident.”

“ Is she here to-day ?”

“ Yes, poor thing ; it is such a mercy she has recovered sufficiently to be able to attend the service.”

“ The bishop’s doctrine was very high, wasn’t it ?” asked the stranger lady.

“Nay, madam,” responded the Baptist minister, who sat on the other side of her, “it was not his doctrine, but his spirit that was very high.”

APPENDIX.

FIFTEEN years later a husband and wife sat together in a luxurious drawing-room, over a fire piled with logs, on a Christmas Eve, at North Hall,—Mr. John Pengelley’s country-house on the Huntingdon Road,—some nine miles out of Cambridge. Their children were all sleeping in their beds above, only the infant lay in a cradle by its mother’s side. The wife sat on one side of the fire, the husband on the other. Outside the wintry wind rustled in the trees, otherwise no sound came to break the stillness of the remote country-house which furnished this warm nest of love. The light was shaded, but not so effectually as to hide the fact that the wife was beautiful in feature, in coloring, and in form. She bore the marks of experiences made and of duties happily discharged, but her aspect was still that of a comparatively young and completely prosperous woman. The husband was unmistakably a stout, well-fed, rich, and comfortable English country gentleman, who preserved his own game, bred his own cattle, and shot over his own covers. He was somewhat somnolent now, having smoked the pipe sacred to the repose of his evening hours, and drunk the moderate potation with which he was accustomed to season it. But his wife was used to talking without getting any replies, so she chattered pleasantly, more to herself than to him.

“I went into Cambridge this morning, John. There was a special service at St. Amwell’s, and for the sake of old association I turned in to see what was going forward. There was a new curate, and he was preaching his first sermon. He was daring; wanted to make an impression, as you will know when I tell you his text. Who do you think it was? I knew him at once. Positively it was Shadrach Trupper.”

At this the husband awoke, and fixed his eyes with kindly interest and sympathy upon his wife.

“And the text?” he enquired.

“Was ‘Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?’ Think of it, John! for his first sermon! Like a half-bred young man, was it not? Raw in taste and poor in experience? And he dwelt upon it, too; whose she should be of the seven. Like a young prig, wasn’t it?”

“I’ve not the least doubt, my dear, that the woman herself knew all about it,” murmured the husband, half asleep again, and only anxious to be complimentary to the superior intelligence of women in general, and of his own wife in particular.

“Neither have I,” she answered thoughtfully. “She would know which of all the seven had been the husband of her soul, had had most power to lift her spirit up. He, I suppose, would be her final choice. Possibly there are spiritual husbands as well as bodily husbands.”

But here Victoria was out of her husband’s depth, as well as her own, and in fact he was peacefully nodding again.

“While Shadrach rashly talked of what he knew nothing about, a wonderful thing happened to me, John,” his wife said to Mr. Pengelley.

“Yes, my dear,” said the sleepy man, half-opening his eyes. “You saw a spider, or broke a glove-button, I suppose.”

Victoria waited a moment till he was sounder asleep, then she said to herself:

“No matter, I will say it all the same. It is best that the dear fellow should not hear it, for he would not understand. I forgot that Shadrach was preaching. I went into a kind of dream, and in that dream I seemed to be once more listening, not to him, but to my second husband, the bishop, and he spoke only to me. He said that because I had loved so much I had been forgiven all the things concerning him with which I had often reproached myself. He said that I had learned the secrets of intimate soul union, and of spirit communion, out of my own very loving nature—a nature that seemed thereby to have been exalted and sanctified. I had been thinking when I went into the church of the description of a bishop as ‘the husband of one wife,’ and of a man I had just lately met at tea at Helen Keltridge’s.”

“‘The husband of one wife’—well, so am I, am I not?” asked John Pengelley indignantly, waking up.

"No doubt, my dear ; but I was not speaking of you, but of a very much cleverer man than you are, whom, as I said, I met at tea ; and this man supposes himself to have discovered that we are all made up of ever so many individualities in one person. I guess he made that discovery when he was quite a young man too, and found himself a different man with every different woman that he adored, don't you ?"

"No, my dear, I only adored you from the very beginning," murmured her heavy-headed lord.

"Again, I was not talking of you, you dear sleepy fellow, but of quite another man ; of a man who has found out that you can be half a dozen persons all in one ; some good, some bad ; can love differently this one and that one, but equally, truly, all and each. All that he professes, or asserts, I—Victoria Pengelley—found out long ago. It is an old lesson ; love teaches it to some of us when we are quite young ; it complicates all our lives ; it fills our hands with thorns when we pluck our roses ; but we know that it is true, though we state it differently, or even though unable to find words for it at all. No one love exhausts the capacities of the human soul ; no one is dearer possibly than another, though one may be higher and another lower. Now *you*, dear John, have been the kindest husband woman ever had, and our children are the dearest treasures possible to possess ; yet I know that Terence Garfoyle was the husband of my soul ; that all that was highest in me ever aspired toward an inner union with his spirit. I was not worthy to be his wife on earth, and spiritually I discerned the fact ; it was a true upward impulse which made me desire to be associated with him ; but the sustained flight was beyond me, 'my flesh shrank from seconding my soul.' I found that out in Browning afterward. There were moments when I touched the heights at which I met him ; but I sank down again, and in the reaction that followed I shrank from the painful conflict, and fell lower than before ; but when I get to heaven, John, in that state, if I am wife or mother at all, I would be once more the wife of Terence Garfoyle, and the mother of Bruce Goldenour !"

But John Pengelley made no immediate answer to his wife's last words ; indeed, she fully believed, before she permitted herself to utter them, that he was far too drowsy to have caught their mean-

ing. He had been out with three dogs and a gun, tramping over heavy land all day. At that instant the infant in the cradle cried, and Victoria gathered it to her bosom with a gesture that indubitably showed how her nature was appeased with happiness.

But Victoria's fine-tempered husband was not quite so steeped in slumber as she had imagined him to be.

"Well! well!" he said, rising with a mighty yawn, "I can quote Browning too, though it may surprise you :

"Heaven speaks first
To the Angel, then the Angel tames the word
Down to the ears of Tobit : he in turn
Diminishes the message to his dog.

You remember that, my dear? I am as sleepy as a hound, and——
Ah! well! All's said! Come, Victoria. Pick up the baby. The day's done."

THE END.

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
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
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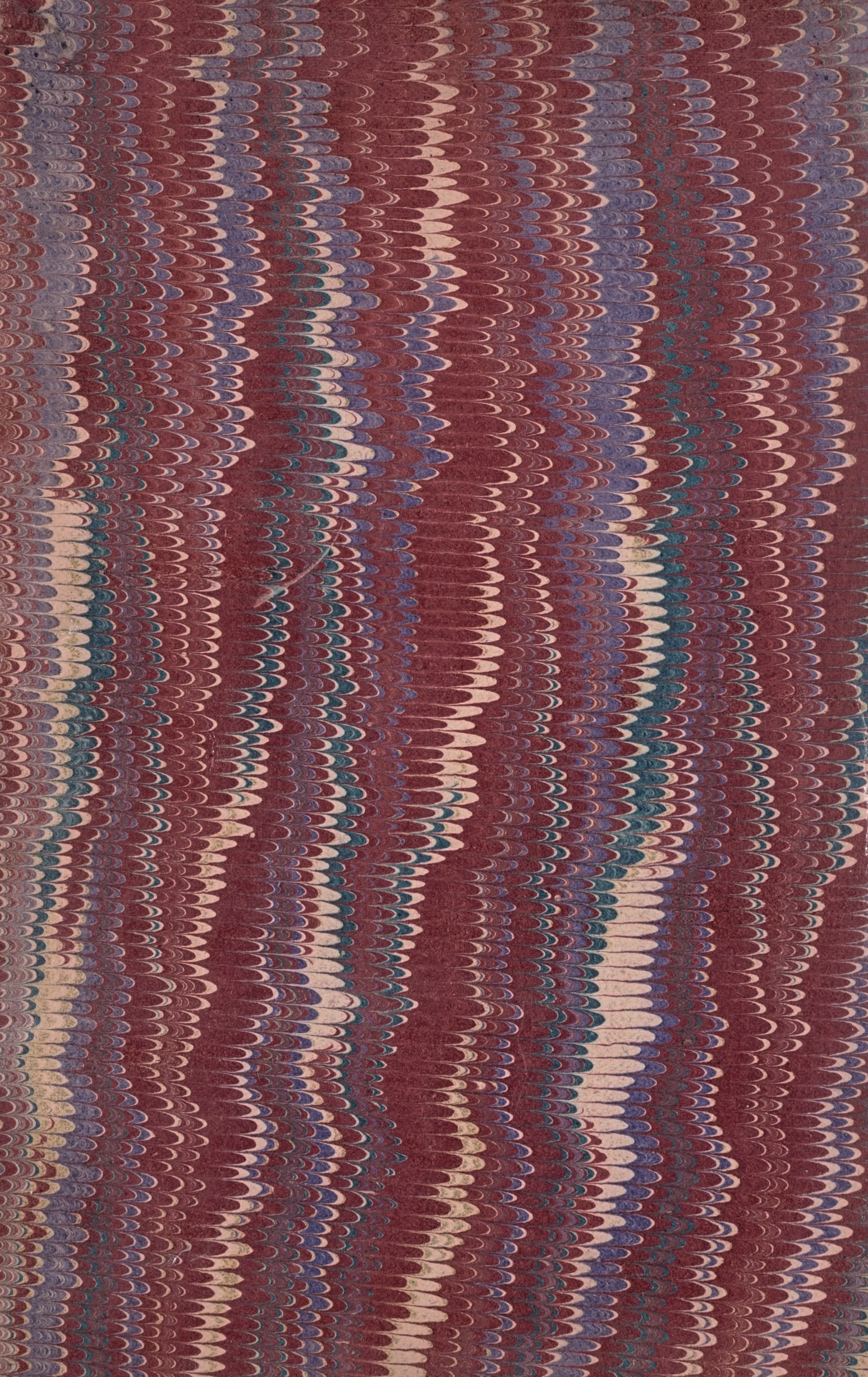
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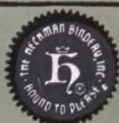
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